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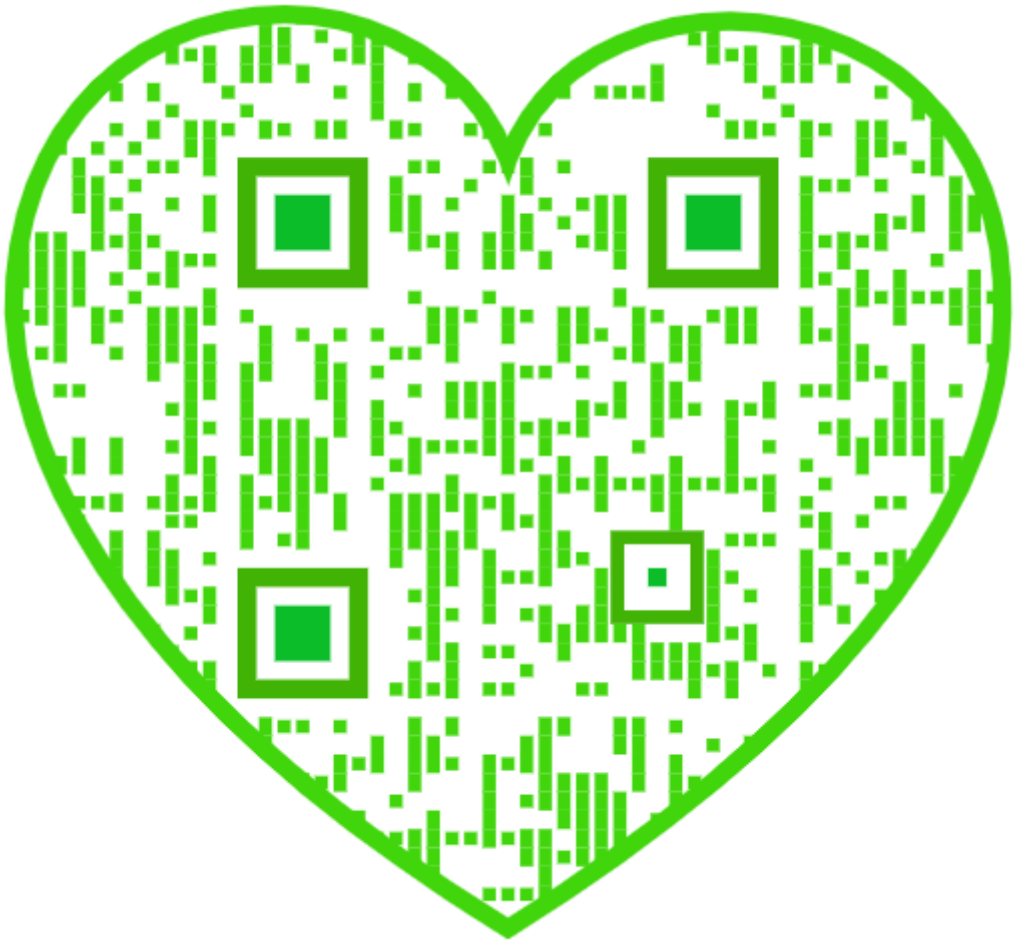
The Life of

Jean-Baptiste Muard



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EDWARD HEALY THOMPSON, M.A.

VOLUME IX.

JEAN-BAPTISTE MUARD.

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NOTICE.

The Editor is again under the necessity of stating that the Lives published in this Series are not translations. In the original prospectus, issued twenty years ago, it was distinctly announced that no translation would be admitted; and to this rule he has strictly adhered.

All Profits derived from the Sale of this Book will be given to the Fund for the Restoration of Buckfast Abbey, Devon.

THE LIFE

OF

JEAN-BAPTISTE MUARD,

Founder of the Congregation of St. Edme and of the Monastery of La Pierre-qui-Vire.

"Si quis vult post me venire, abneget seipsum, et tollat crucem suam, et sequatur me."—St. Matt. xvi. 24.

"Jugum meum suave est, et onus meum leve."—St. Luc. ix. 23.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS biography of the holy Founder of the Congregation of St. Edme and of the Monastery of La Pierre-qui-Vire is not a translation, neither is it the reproduction of any previous work, the writer having enjoyed the supreme advantage of consulting a large collection of authentic documents, hitherto unpublished, which have been supplied to him by the kindness of the monks of Buckfast Abbey, to whom he desires to record his most grateful thanks. Among these ought especially to be mentioned a memoir of the Servant of God, still in manuscript, by his confidential friend and associate, Père Benoit, of which large use has been made.

The Abbé Brullée, Chaplain to the Convent of Ste Colombe-les-Sens, and an intimate friend of Père Muard, undertook, immediately on receiving the sorrowful news of his decease, to write an account of his life, both as a tribute of personal reverence and affection and for the spiritual benefit which his heroic example was calculated to confer on others. This work first appeared in 1855, and he was occupied in

preparing a second edition, revised and corrected with the help of his own notes and such as had been furnished him, when failure of health obliged him to intrust its completion to other hands. The first edition of 3,000 copies had long been sold out; the second appeared eight years later. It contained some corrections and additions, but a few inaccuracies were still inadvertently permitted to remain. These principally concerned P. Muard's early days, the Abbé having trusted certain reports made to him respecting the behaviour of Jean-Baptiste's family, and particularly in regard to his mother's treatment of him, which upon closer investigation were found to be unsupported and undeserved. Had the Abbé lived, it is needless to say that he would have been anxious to amend any misstatements and modify any exaggerations into which he had been unconsciously betrayed. Of this second edition a translation by the Right Reverend Dom Isidore Robot, O.S.B., Abbot and Prefect Apostolic of the Indian Territory, was published in America in the year 1882.

With the aid of the documents intrusted to him the present writer has been enabled to place various incidents and transactions in a truer and clearer light, as well as to make copious additions to the narrative. Of these documents, a special value attaches to the numerous depositions taken on oath with a view to the introduction of the cause of the Servant of God

at Rome. It may, therefore, be devoutly hoped that the day will come when this saintly and apostolic man will be raised to the altars of the Universal Church.

Meanwhile it only remains for the present biographer to protest, in obedience to the decrees of Urban VIII. and other Sovereign Pontiffs, that all the graces, revelations, and supernatural facts related in this volume have only a human authority; and that in all that he has written respecting the life and virtues of Jean-Baptiste Muard he submits himself without reserve to the infallible judgment of the Apostolic See, which alone has power and authority to pronounce as to whom rightly belong the character and title of Saint.

CHELTENHAM, *Michaelmas, 1886.*

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INTRODUCTION.

"I HAVE seen in the course of my life," said the Comte de Montalembert, writing to the venerable biographer of Père Muard, "many priests and religious in France, in Germany, in Italy, in Spain, in Portugal, in short, throughout Europe, but I do not believe that I ever met any who awakened in my soul in so vivid a manner the idea of a Saint"; and, when the Count visited the sanctuary of Subiaco, he was able also to testify to the deep impression which "the French monk" had made upon its religious inmates. P. Muard, we may venture to say, was truly indeed—as all who best knew him believed him to be—one of those privileged souls whom God is pleased to choose for the regeneration of Christians in corrupt times; souls to whom it is given to communicate to other souls life and movement, in a greater or less degree, according to the designs of Him who works out His purposes by His Spirit dwelling in the Church, the mystical Body of Christ. For this would seem, if we reverently scrutinize His operations, to be the Lord's way and method (to use familiar words) in effecting reforms, as also in the development of devotions already existing in the Church, but awaiting the time of the "good Householder" for their fuller expansion and

diffusion. He works from centres, often of a very obscure and humble character:

> "The centre moved, a circle straight succeeds,
> Another still, and still another, spreads".*

Grace descends to move the face of the waters, it descends on the soul of some one individual, who thus becomes the centre of a great movement, the circumference of which who can measure? This soul has a vocation, a mission from above. It presses him, it urges him, it leaves him no rest until it be fulfilled.

In one sense it is true that all have, more or less, a mission to influence for good such as come in contact with them, but this only in the ordinary way of manifesting the Christian character in their daily lives and thus becoming a source of edification to their neighbours. Such persons are not called to adopt any extraordinary line of action; they simply present an example, pure, gentle, upright, and unobtrusive. In the cases of which we speak there is a striking difference, which exemplifies another peculiarity in the dealings of God. These chosen souls, not only stem the world's current by acting justly in the midst of its evil influences, but they directly oppose and run counter to the prevailing spirit of their age and its leading characteristics. They do not merely select its better elements and strive to elevate them and enlist them in the cause of religious progress; they go right in its very teeth, and seem to be men of another age, born, as it were, out of date. Had P. Muard belonged to the early ages of the Church, had he learned his doctrine at the feet of St. Benedict or of one of that great patriarch's holy followers, had he been born and reared in those rough times, we should not regard him with

* Pope, *Essay on Man*, 365, 366.

the same wonder; but in these softer days of ours, when austere rules have to be mitigated in order to render them practicable to men of a less vigorous and hardy constitution than were the early monastic athletes, when the very precepts of the Church concerning fasting and abstinence have been reduced to the utmost limit, that they might be found tolerable by the mass of the faithful, we contemplate with more than admiration such a mission as that to which P. Muard was called.

"Fodder, and a wand, and a burden are for an ass: bread, and correction, and work for a slave." * These words of the Son of Sirach embody P. Muard's estimate of himself and of the treatment which he considered to befit him. He accordingly felt himself drawn by grace to lead personally a life of rigid asceticism and self-abnegation. Such callings, however, have never been wanting in the most relaxed and self-indulgent times; these would therefore present nothing in themselves to cause us much surprise, and he could easily have found a grateful solitude in La Trappe or the Chartreuse where he might have yielded himself without reserve to his attraction. But no: this did not suffice him; or, rather, it sufficed not Him by whom he was called not only to sanctify his own soul in the seclusion of the cloister, but to become the founder of a new institution, which was "to ally two lives entirely different, the cenobitic and the apostolic". Of this peculiar calling he was conscious, for they are his own words which we here quote; and we cannot but repeat that in our days to entertain such a project seems a marvel, to be enabled to carry it out a still greater one.

* Ecclus. xxxiii. 25.

The object of the present biography is to trace this undertaking from its first germs in the heart of him who was to accomplish its successful realization. To do so is to relate the life of this hero of sanctity, not a life of stirring events or of varied incident in the usual sense, for such are wanting, but nevertheless a life of deep interest to those who love to trace God's dealings with souls chosen for some great work in His Church. For these dealings, in fact, weave the thread of real events, abiding events; because, unlike the natural vicissitudes of earthly life, so engrossing at the time but which are things of time alone, they belong to the drama of a supernatural and higher life, and are to bear fruit for eternity.

CHAPTER I.

HIS BOYHOOD.

In one of the poorest houses of an obscure village of Burgundy, on the 29th of April, 1809, a child was born who was destined by Divine Providence to restore in France—and, may we not hope, beyond its limits?—the rule of St. Benedict in all its primitive austerity. This little village may one day, from this very circumstance, become famous, but its name has hitherto remained unfamiliar to the world; nay, its very existence, owing to its insignificance, is almost unknown beyond its immediate neighbourhood. It is situated in the hollow of a narrow valley in the canton of Ancy-le-Franc, in the diocese of Sens, about nine miles south of the town of Tonnerre, and is called Vireaux. The name of the child's father was Claude Muard, his

mother's Catherine Paillot. He was the eldest of three sons, one of whom was still living in 1863; the other having made a truly Christain death. The family was very poor, as regarded worldly goods, but, owing, no doubt, to the evil times in which they had lived, they were poor in a more regrettable sense. Much excuse, however, must be made for the peasantry in these little disinherited parishes, if many of them had fallen into the habit of imperfectly fulfilling their religious obligations, or entirely disregarding them. They would willingly have continued to practise their religion, but for long years this had become a matter of extreme difficulty, owing to the scarcity of priests during those days of cruel persecution. Neglect was the almost inevitable consequence, and, even after the restoration of religion, it was many years before Vireaux possessed a pastor of its own. Nevertheless the mother of this future Apostle, who was an excellent woman, had not ceased to be a Catholic at heart, and desired to bring up her children religiously. The father was a worthy man in the natural order. The testimony of his son, given in after years, is clear on this point. "My father," he says, "was an honest workman; laborious and, indeed, I might say indefatigable, for God had endowed him with robust health. Born in the midst of social disturbances, he was ignorant of a Christian's duties. He lived, like most men of his time, in the greatest practical indifference. But God took account of the sacrifice he made in permitting me to follow my sacerdotal vocation."

This blessed child came, however, of a good stock, and, if his lowly pedigree were traced back to the last century, ancestors might be met with who for their Christian piety were not unworthy of him. This piety

had survived, through all the miserable revolutions which France had undergone, in the person of young Muard's old paternal grandmother, who became in God's hands a main instrument in preserving and transmitting to her grandson the richest inheritance which could have fallen to his lot, and through him in ultimately restoring it to the other members of her family. The infant was baptised on the day after his birth, the good and pious practice of not delaying the sacrament of regeneration being maintained by his parents, and the name of Jean-Baptiste which was given to him may, indeed, be regarded as prophetic of his future career. While he was still in the cradle his mother used to say, "I do not know whether my child will be naughty when he grows older, but he is at present so gentle and placid that I could not say that he knows how to cry or be cross". The promise of his babyhood was not deceptive. As he grew older the equanimity of his temper became only the more manifest. From his very infancy also a singular modesty was observable in his every word and act, coupled with an amiable gaiety which endeared him to his playmates, whose innocent sports he would willingly share, though he never joined them in any rude or noisy frolic. His child's heart was, in fact, inwardly drawn to God; and not only was he already remarkable for his reverential behaviour in church, but he would pray as he walked along the road, and, to aid his devotion, as he did not possess a rosary, he had manufactured for himself a substitute in the shape of a small piece of wood on which he had cut notches. Detected by the prying eyes of his companions, he became the object of their ridicule and banter, all which he endured with imperturbable good temper.

That, however, notwithstanding his devout practices, he was a general favourite with other children of his age, we learn from the testimony of his surviving uncle, who was also his godfather, and of other relatives who had known him well. His early piety was happily fostered by his good grandmother, and he loved, in after years, gratefully to recall what he owed to her in this respect. She would take him on her knee, teach him to repeat the names of Jesus and Mary, and in her simple fashion talk to him of the love of the good God, the fear of His judgments, and the hatefulness of sin, particularly of blasphemy and lying. It is said that in her youth she had never learned to read, but, at any rate, she remembered her catechism sufficiently well to instruct her little grandson.

It is remarkable how long pure morals and piety will survive in country parts under the most unfavourable circumstances. The well-known Clement Brentano makes this observation when visiting, while Sister Emmerich was still living, the scenes of her childhood. "I have found," he says, "that the purity of life and the devotion which still exist in the district of Munster are to be referred much more to fidelity to traditional faith, the imitation of the virtue of pious parents, the great reverence felt for priests and their blessing, and the frequentation of the church and of the sacraments, than to the spread of instruction." He then relates how, early one morning, peeping through a hedge, he saw a little girl, about seven years old, clothed in rags, who was driving some geese to a meadow, and overheard her saying her prayers as she followed them: "Good morning, dear Lord God. Praised be Jesus Christ! Good Father, who art in Heaven, I salute Thee. Mary, full of grace, I want to

be good, I want to be pious. Good saints of Paradise, good angels, I wish to be good. I have got a bit of bread to eat; I thank you for this dear bit of bread. Oh, take care of me, too, that my geese may not go among the corn, and some bad boy may not kill one of them by throwing stones at them. Take care of me, then; I will be a good girl; dear Father, who art in Heaven"—a prayer, he remarks, which would have been scarcely to the taste of a modern schoolmistress. When he reflected, he said, on the ignorance and rusticity of many of the priests, on the neglected state of the churches, where even the want of proper order and decorum was too frequently visible, on the fact that the instruction, not being given in the popular dialect, was difficult of comprehension to the lower classes, and yet, with these and other drawbacks, he daily had occasion to mark the purity, innocence, and honesty of some among the poorest of the people, and their aptitude to understand even deep things, he felt very strongly that the Lord and His grace are more living in the Church than in words and writing, for they exist and live with a creative force in the holy sacraments, which are perpetuated and renewed eternally by the sacred and marvellous virtue which God has attached to sacerdotal consecration. The Church is there, with her benediction, her salutary influence, her power to sanctify and perform miracles: she maintains herself as creation does, and shall survive nature; for she is a force and a creation of God, and all those who believe in Jesus and in His Church have a share in her gifts.* France, however, had been more sorely tried

* "Sister Emmerich," he tells us, "entertained the same sentiment, which was confirmed by her visions: that the old schoolmasters, so poor, so laborious, and forced, in order to make a

than Catholic Germany, where the Church, though miserably depressed, despoiled, and hampered in the exercise of her authority, could still deal the Bread of Life to her children. The wonder, therefore, is all the greater to find how much primitive faith and piety had in many cases survived the spiritual famine as well as the persecution of those desolating years.

As Jean-Baptiste grew in stature he advanced in grace, but his opportunities for acquiring knowledge were not large, being restricted to what a village school about three miles distant could supply. The boy, however, had much aptitude for learning, and the seriousness of his character caused him to apply himself

living, to follow besides the trade of tailors, received more abundantly from God the grace to train children piously than the new teachers of both sexes, with that paltry vanity which they often derive from the examination which they have passed. Every work produces its fruit in a certain measure, but, when the teacher finds a personal gratification in his work, he consumes, as it were, for his own profit a portion of the blessed fruits which others attribute to him. The teachers say to themselves, 'We teach well'; the children, 'We learn well'; and the parents are pleased that their children are well taught and brought forward; everywhere there is an effort after display and self-importance. People certainly read and write better, but, along with this enlargement of capacity, the enemy sows daily more weeds in the way, and piety and virtue diminish every day." (*Vie d' Anne-Catherine Emmerich*, par le Père K. E. Schmœger de la Congrégation du Très-Saint Rédempteur; traduite de l'allemand par E. de Cazalès, Vicaire-Général et Chanoine de Versailles. Tome I. pp. 8-10.) Such was the opinion of this saintly woman, and it is worth considering in these days, when such high pressure is put upon education, not to speak of the predominance now given to mere secular knowledge, a matter to which she was not referring, and which had not then reached or so much as aimed at its modern development.

earnestly to whatever task was set him. By seriousness we do not mean any special outward gravity beyond his years, but that valuable disposition, the want of which will make the most brilliant talents run to waste, through sheer levity or want of reflection, while its possession will lead to the fructification of every faculty and opportunity for good, so that nothing is lost. The consequence was that Jean-Baptiste always held a foremost rank in school, as regarded both learning and good conduct. An instance of obedience is related of him by the Abbé Brullée when he was quite a little boy, under eight years of age. The master having noticed that the children had the practice of going yearly to church on the feast-day of St. Catherine, the patroness of young women, where they behaved in a very noisy and unbecoming manner, he resolved to put an end to this abuse, and strictly forbade their attending the office in that saint's honour under pain of exemplary chastisement. The boys, however, were not to be so easily deprived of their fun; and, in defiance of the prohibition, they walked off in a body the next day, not excepting Jean-Baptiste, who probably had not much choice in the matter. The schoolmaster was naturally very irate at this act of disobedience; and, after administering to his assembled scholars a severe reprimand, he ordered them all to kneel down and remain in that attitude as long as he judged proper. Not one of them stirred except little Jean-Baptiste, who at once placed himself on his knees to perform his penance, alone and uncountenanced by any of his companions. At last the solitary example of this young boy shamed the rest into obedience, and one after the other they sulkily complied with the master's orders. But they were no sooner out of school than they

determined to make Jean-Baptiste pay for their humiliation and rushed at him with a cry of indignation; being fleet of foot, however, he escaped from his pursuers, whose wrath we may presume was not of long duration.

When Jean-Baptiste was in his eleventh year an incident occurred which was to influence profoundly his whole future life, by deciding his vocation to the priesthood. The boy had strolled out one day with apparently no special purpose, but guided unconsciously, no doubt, by his good angel, when, on turning into the main street of the village, in which the church was situated, he descried M. Rolley, the Curé of Pacy-sur-Armançon, a village about three miles distant, whence Vireaux was served. From what was probably a natural shyness, he did not wish to encounter him, so went back into the little lane in which his father's house stood, to allow the priest to pass on. But M. Rolley had observed him, and he, too, turned up the lane, where he found Jean-Baptiste leaning with his back against a wall. He called the child to him, and without preamble of any sort asked him whether he would like to learn the Gospel for the Purification. Jean-Baptiste respectfully replied that he would, and, after making his bow, ran home to tell his grandmother, who looked out the lesson for him, and, with her help, it was not long before he had got it by heart. Both now looked with anxious impatience for Candlemas Day. Hitherto Jean-Baptiste had not attended the Curé's catechetical instructions at Pacy, but when the 2nd of February arrived he presented himself to repeat the Gospel of the feast. As soon as his turn came, he stepped forward and acquitted himself with much self-possession, not making a single mistake. In after

years, recalling this day, of which he always celebrated the anniversary with great joy and renewal of fervour, and of which his memory had preserved the most trifling details, P. Muard said that he was about to sit down again in his place, when M. Rolley, satisfied with his performance, asked his "little friend" whether he would like to learn Latin, and to study, that he might become a priest some day. Not one moment did the boy either need or take for reflection, and a most emphatic "Yes" broke at once from his lips. From that moment, as he himself afterwards attested, he never entertained the slightest doubt of his vocation to the ecclesiastical state. Only two years before his death he said, "When I heard those words I felt more happy than if all the treasures of the world had been offered to me". A vague desire for such a vocation had, indeed, previously existed in the depths of his heart, but the poverty of his parents seemed to offer an insuperable obstacle to its realization.

Meanwhile, at home his mother and grandmother were counting the moments till his return, hope and fear alternately prevailing. Had he said his lesson well? Had he been seized with a fit of shyness, and his memory failed him? But here he comes, beaming with joy. All was right. He had succeeded. M. le Curé had expressed himself well pleased with him. But that was not all: he had said something else; and Jean-Baptiste confided to his parents the flattering prospect held out to him. To say that they experienced the same satisfaction at the unexpected announcement would not be true. It surprised and disconcerted them not a little. It was all very well, and very desirable, that their son should attend Catechism along with the children of the adjoining parishes (which, like Vireaux,

lacked pastors of their own) in order to prepare for his first communion and receive religious instruction from the Curé, but a thousand difficulties started up before them as to this project of education for the priesthood, involving, as it would, expenses which they would be unable to meet, besides depriving them of the active assistance of their boy, just as he was approaching the age when he might earn a little money. They gave him, therefore, no encouragement, though they sent him regularly to Pacy for instruction. It appears that his promising dispositions and remarkable piety had been mentioned privately to the Curé by an aged nun living in retirement at Vireaux, doubtless one of the many religious who had been cruelly ejected from their convents during the Revolution. She had told him that Jean-Baptiste Muard was no ordinary child, and that he ought not to remain in the world. M. Rolley, however, discreetly abstained from broaching the matter to his family for some little time. Doubtless he wished first to satisfy himself fully as to the boy's capabilities. One day, however, when the time for the first communion was drawing nigh, the Curé, when paying a visit to Jean-Baptiste's parents, surprised them with the information that their son had not only been learning his catechism, but had already been instructed by him in the rudiments of Latin. He had found that he possessed a great aptitude for study; his proficiency had been rapid; everything, in short, combined to give hope of success if the boy were to be prepared for the sacerdotal career. M. Rolley proceeded to anticipate all objections on the score of expense, for he would himself undertake the necessary preparation before sending him to the Petit Séminaire. "You will tell me," he added, "that your pecuniary resources will

not permit you to deprive yourselves of your son's assistance, and, above all, that you would be quite unable to pay his *pension* at the seminary. All this I have forseen. But do not be uneasy; with the exception of his maintenance, I charge myself with everything." "My father and mother," said P. Muard, referring to this interview, "saw all their plans upset. They had reckoned upon me. I was now at last to begin to be helpful to them. Nevertheless they did not offer any opposition to M. le Curé's views, and as soon as I had made my first communion, I was able to occupy myself about my future under the direction of this good priest." The behaviour of these poor people was certainly much to their credit, particularly to that of the father, who could hardly be said to be a Christian, and who therefore must have been actuated simply by a strong sense of natural justice and kindness to his son. But, although neither of the parents opposed the Curé, and although they ultimately acceded to their son's wishes, it is not to be concluded that he had encountered no difficulties. On the contrary, it is certain, from the avowal of his mother in after years, that she used her best endeavours to thwart his aspirations and to fix him in some secular profession. Of this an instance is recorded during the year which preceded his first communion.

The father and uncle of Jean-Baptiste had a timber-yard near Tonnerre, where they used to work together, and the child got leave to accompany them one day, more as an amusement for him than for any service he could render them. Not far from the yard a very indifferent fiddler was plying his art. Jean-Baptiste, attracted by the sound of the instrument, drew near to the house from which it proceeded, and finally walked

in at the invitation of the musician, who made himself very agreeable to his young visitor; placed the violin in his hands, and showed him how to hold it and to scrape some notes upon it. Like most children on similar occasions, Jean-Baptiste was greatly pleased, and, after producing a few sounds more or less harmonious with the assistance of his encouraging teacher, fancied himself quite a proficient, and ran off to tell his father and godfather of his success. He then returned to the fiddler and his captivating instrument to take another lesson. Meanwhile a bright idea was dawning on poor Claude's mind: clearly his boy had musical talents which might be turned to profit; and the moment he reached home he related the occurrence to his wife, who eagerly fell in with his views, and they both determined not to lose a day, after his first communion, in sending their son as an apprentice to some music-master. That such a plan would in no way have coincided with Jean-Baptiste's aspirations need scarcely be said. In addition to the objection on the score of poverty, it seems that his mother had conceived a dread of excessive piety on the part of her boy, a dread which is apt to get possession of parents when their own is more or less deficient. It would "turn his head": so she persuaded herself; and she had already scolded him for that improvised instrument of devotion which she had discovered.* She wished her son to be a good Christian undoubtedly, but did not like singularity. Why could he not be like other people? Well, Jean-

* Some exaggerated stories were current on this and other particulars of his mother's conduct, and it was declared that she did not even know what a rosary was. This was an absurd assertion, and moreover untrue, since it was expressly stated by one qualified to speak with certainty that he had often seen her taking part in the devotion of the Rosary in church.

Baptiste was not like other people, it must be confessed, even as the saints of God have never been like other people; and learning the violin was, happily, not to remove the singularity in question, or increase his likeness to ordinary youths. He was, however, too dutiful a son not to do as he was bid, and accordingly for a few weeks he continued to go and take lessons at Tonnerre. At the end of this time his mother thought his proficiency must be sufficient for a satisfactory exhibition of his talent, with which view she got up a little dance at her house. All the young people of the village were invited, and Jean-Baptiste was to furnish the music. It was with a very heavy heart that he submitted, and took up his violin, but, whether from this cause, or that he had really small aptitude for the work, the attempt was a complete failure, and he laid down his instrument in disgust.

It is related how upon another occasion he had an unpleasant scene with his mother on the subject of his vocation, when the good woman seems to have lost her temper. She then left him alone, and went to look after her household avocations, when suddenly, feeling moved with curiosity to know what her boy was about, she returned and, peeping through the keyhole, saw him on his knees praying. In the evening she asked him what he had been doing there by himself, and he replied in all simplicity, "Praying the good God for you, mother". She was silent, but, indeed, when she had caught a sight of the boy on his knees, like another young Aloysius, she had said to herself, "It is all over. He will be a priest." From that moment she ceased all active opposition.

It may be justly said that the two most important communions in the life of a Christian are his first and

his last; and if upon the state of soul in which a man receives his Viaticum more depends than upon the fervour, the recollection, and the purity of conscience with which, as a child, he first approached the altar, nevertheless all agree that the manner in which a first communion is made has an incalculable influence on the future life. Young as he was, Jean-Baptiste was most deeply impressed with the sublimity of the divine gift which he was preparing to receive. There was a kind of maturity in his mind, although externally he might seem like other children, so that he brought to this great act, not merely the innocency and purity of conscience which adorn so many of the lambs of the flock, not merely the sweet piety of the spring-time of life, the fragrance of which reminds us of the delicate fresh scent of an early flower, but a devotion full of a more ripened ardour and a love of mortification, such as might be found in one who had numbered twice his years, and whose high vocation to minister one day at the altar where now he kneels, has passed from the state of vague and distant aspiration to one of deliberate purpose and clear anticipation. Jean-Baptiste had been lately feeding his devotion on Lives of the Saints, when he could obtain any to read, and, in particular, he had studied with delight those of St. Aloysius Gonzaga and St. Stanislas Kostka, the example of whose youthful sanctity filled his young soul with generous resolves, and nourished the love and confidence which from his tenderest years he had felt for Mary. Every day he imposed on himself some secret penitential act, so early was the leading characteristic of his piety, the spirit of penance, developed in him. What passed in his soul when the great day arrived which was first to unite him to his Lord in Com-

munion, is known only to God, but some portion, at least, was revealed externally, for he was remarked, amongst all the children, for the expression of heavenly calm, recollection, and sweetness displayed in his countenance, so that persons who had seen and observed the boy went home saying that he looked like an angel adoring before the throne of the eternal.

Young Muard now entered regularly on his preparatory course of studies as pupil of the Curé of Pacy. A few particulars which have been recorded of him at this period may serve to throw a light on the work of grace which was meanwhile inwardly preparing him for his great calling. Along with the love of penance the desire of martyrdom early sprang up in him; how early, we might not have known but for the following dialogue related by one of his fellow-pupils in after years. He was a little younger than Jean-Baptiste, who, as they were walking together one day, put the following question to him: "Tell me what you wish for most". "What I wish for most," replied his companion, "is to have soon learned enough to enter the seminary." "That is not what I mean," rejoined Jean-Baptiste. "I mean in a religious way." "Well, I earnestly desire that God may give me the grace to be one day a good priest." Jean-Baptiste was much pleased with this answer, and was then questioned in his turn as to his own greatest earthly desire. He replied, without a moment's hesitation, that his greatest desire was to shed his blood for Jesus Christ. "Yes," he repeated, "what I desire most is to be a martyr. If you are a good priest you will certainly get to heaven, but if I am a martyr I shall get there first; for you may see by the Lives of the Saints which we read every evening that those who give their life in testi-

mony of their faith enter immediately into the Kingdom of Heaven." To him through life, and thus early in life, the love of the martyrs was the model and typical love: "Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends".* While yet a child in years, he thus unconsciously shared the sentiments of that holy Dominican, the eminent mystic and great apostle of self-abnegation, Thaulerus, who exclaims, "I remember to have heard say that there are blessed souls exalted in glory above the martyrs, but as for me, in the ardour with which the Holy Spirit animates us, I boldly affirm that among all chaste loves I cherish most that of the martyrs, which is so perfect and so generous".† The spirit of martyrdom he considers, then, as the highest charity; not, we need scarcely say, the mere fact of martyrdom, glorious as may be the crown it merits; it is the highest charity, because it sets the highest value on Jesus, desiring to give all to Him who has given Himself wholly for us.‡

This desire for martyrdom did not proceed in Jean-Baptiste from a mere effervescence and fervour of devotion; it was planted deep in his young heart, and was the fruitful root of the numerous acts of mortification which he was continually performing, and by which he seemed to be preparing himself for the greatest of all sacrifices, that of his life, should God ever grant to him the favour of dying for the faith. This was the secret of his equanimity in the midst of every difficulty, trouble, or annoyance; this was the secret of his

* St. John xv. 13.

† *Les Institutions de Thaulère*, p. 355.

‡ Our Lady we know is the Queen of Martyrs, although she did not shed her blood for her Son.

unfailing condescension to the wishes and, indeed, to the merest caprices of his companions, so long as such condescension involved only the sacrifice of his own tastes and inclinations, and no departure from the strict rule of duty; this was the secret of his imperturbable placidity under every provocation, for Jean-Baptiste was not only never seen to be irritated, but never even to be disturbed or ruffled. His extraordinary patience and sweetness were, however, ill understood or imperfectly appreciated by some of his fellow-scholars. They referred it to mere natural disposition, perhaps to a want of sensitiveness, such as persons of what is called a lymphatic temperament are apt to manifest; they failed to see in it an act of the will sustained by piety and nourished by grace. Boys, besides, and even good boys, will sometimes love to teaze each other; it would appear to be part of the boyish nature. Young Muard, when fatigued, was a very sound sleeper, and one of the tricks recorded as having been practised on him by his companions was the lifting him up by the four corners of the sheet he was lying on and carrying him out into the garden on a cold autumnal night. He went on sleeping, and when the laughter of the boys awoke him he joined heartily in their merriment. Nothing, indeed, could ever move him to impatience; nay, if his persecutors were detected in this kind of sport, which consists in trying the temper of a companion, and were justly reprimanded for it, he would be the first to take their part and make excuses for them. Resentment was throughout his whole life a feeling which found no harbour in his bosom, whether the injuries he received were great or small, and of this, we see, he early gave proof; but his memory was most tenacious of the slightest benefit or

kindness. Years afterwards, when he had become a priest and a missionary, he still retained the warmest gratitude towards all those who had befriended him in his childhood and youth, and lost no opportunity of testifying it. For instance, he never failed to do so if he happened to meet the mother of one of his fellow-scholars who, in the months which preceded his first communion, and afterwards when studying at Pacy, would often help him in the straits to which his poverty reduced him; for it will be remembered that the good Curé did not provide for the board of his pupils.

Whether or no Jean-Baptiste would by nature have been subject, like other children, to anger and impatience, it is difficult to say; for, having, as it were, made an oblation of himself to suffer, when anything disagreeable to flesh and blood presented itself this abiding spirit of mortification made it welcome to him. To be uncomfortable was a sort of treat to him. Thus we are told of his volunteering to part with his mattrass when he found that one was required for an object of charity, and sleeping on straw for above a year with lively satisfaction. Moreover, he was not content with joyfully accepting the privations and trials which came to him by the providence of God, but added austerities of his own. The same fellow-pupil who furnished the previous details has related how one day, in the midst of their recreative sports, he seized young Muard by the collar and felt his fingers pricked by something. This excited his curiosity; so, desiring to ascertain the cause, he made another sudden rush at him, as if in play, and, making him bend his head forwards, was able to perceive that he wore under his clothes a sharp hair-shirt which had penetrated the skin in places and

drawn blood. On making this discovery, he besieged Jean-Baptiste with questions, but could get no answer from him. He was silent, and slipped away from his interrogator. "But," adds his former companion, "I went almost immediately to tell M. le Curé what had happened. 'Leave him in peace,' he said; 'he is a saint; it is a hair-shirt he wears to do penance.'" "My saint," It may be observed, was the term he commonly applied to this favoured pupil. From this we see that Jean-Baptiste did not act without the permission of his spiritual father. The Abbé Rolley, perceiving the boy's attraction for austerities, and considering that he had good health and a most energetic will, had not thwarted his inclination but directed and guided him in the way by which God seemed to be leading him; a way, we may add, which through life he continued to tread with ever-increasing ardour.

M. Rolley watched with inward joy the progress of grace in his young pupil's soul, but the only way in which he showed the preference with which he regarded him was in dealing mortifications to him with an unsparing hand. A fellow-student, giving his testimony in after years, was of opinion that he pushed this severity too far, but we do not think that the subject of this discipline would have agreed with him. The same scholar relates the following incident in illustration of M. Rolley's method. The Curé, who served three or four parishes, always took one of his pupils with him in visiting them. On one occasion, when young Muard was his companion, they had gone through more than usual fatigue, and they returned late. M. Rolley's sister had prepared a fine fowl for them, and was rather proud of the achievement. The vigilant Curé thought he saw a spark of culinary vanity

in her, and suddenly thought of applying a remedy. Instead, therefore, of falling to at her tempting dish, he turned to his young companion and said, "Come, Muard, we are both pretty hungry ; but now, my boy, supposing our Lord were to come and beg us to give Him this fine roast fowl what would you do?" "Give it Him with both my hands, and eat dry bread," was the prompt reply. "Very well," said M. Rolley, "our Lord is poor old Father Gourlade, who is sick. Take this fowl to him at once." The sister loudly remonstrated, and wanted to stop him, but she was one against two. Besides, Muard believed he was to obey God in the person of his master rather than the cook ; so he ran off with the smoking dish, and came back to eat a hearty meal of bread and cheese.

That the idea of life as a pilgrimage to the heavenly home, and thus necessarily involving hardship and suffering, was constantly present to the mind of this boy, is evidenced by the following little incident. One day, being sent by the Curé to accompany several persons to Troyes, the journey being performed on foot, after nearly forty miles had been accomplished he was so extremely tired, what with the length of the way and what with a pair of tight shoes he had on, that he was fain to stop and sit down awhile by the roadside. After a brief rest, with which he almost seemed to reproach himself, he said, "I am quite done up, and my feet are swollen, but, if I had to walk a whole day more in this state to get to Heaven, I should do it right willingly". Then, rising with fresh spirit at the thought, he walked on, but, a public conveyance happening to overtake the party, his companions made him get into it for the rest of the journey. These holy thoughts were nourished in him by his practice of con-

tinually reading some pious book, and he had always one about him which he particularly valued; neither was he satisfied to be the only person to profit by its contents. The missionary spirit was already working in him, and, upon the occasion to which we are alluding, he would occasionally stop, as he walked along, to read some choice passage to his fellow-travellers and bespeak their admiration for its beauty. Interesting conversation followed upon the subjects thus raised, when his young imagination would pour itself forth in all its exuberant freshness, picturing the happiness of the religious life and exalting the generosity of the saints and martyrs.

A remark made by him on this same journey served to reveal that what might be called the ruling passion of his life; the noble passion for the foreign missions had already got possession of his soul, a passion never to be gratified in its literal sense, for it pleased God that the sphere of his missionary labours should be his own native France. The day was extremely hot, and the young apostle added to the exhaustion of walking under a blazing sun the exercise of his tongue in the manner just described. An intense thirst was the result, but there was no pure stream at hand at which he could slake it; nothing but a muddy puddle, collected in one of the deep ruts of the road, presented itself; and Jean-Baptiste, notwithstanding the earnest remonstrances of his companions, stooped down and drank of it with avidity after the fashion of Gedeon's warriors. "That water is certainly very bad," he said, as he rose; "but if I am ever a missionary among savages I may not always get as good." By some mischance, he lost that very day the precious little book out of which, so to say, he had been preaching; he was

sadly grieved, and the chief cause of his sorrow was characteristic of him. "What afflicts me most," he said, "is the fear lest the book may have fallen into the hands of irreligious persons or of Jansenists, of whom there are a great many in the country we have just been crossing; for, as it is a book which excites to devotion for the Blessed Virgin and exhorts people to frequent communion, it is sure to be burned." He consoled himself for the loss of this book by getting another in its place entitled *Angelic Virtue*, which he managed to read all through on his way back to Pacy. So ardent a love for spiritual reading, and especially for the Lives of the Saints, may be considered as a strong prognostic of future sanctity, just as, in the natural order, a great love of painting, music, or the like, is almost a certain sign of latent talent in that direction. But this predilection is not a prognostic only, it is a powerful instrument for nourishing holy thoughts and aspirations in the bosom of youth. We know how stories of warlike achievements and deeds of valour will help to mould the character of boys and fire their hearts with the ambition to be themselves heroes and earn a like renown; and so, in like manner, the memories of Christian martyrs and confessors who fought the good fight of faith held possession of Jean-Baptiste's mind and filled him with a noble emulation to follow in their steps. Yet young Muard could be a boy with other boys, and join in their sports with a cordial gaiety, which, though it never overpassed just bounds, had nothing in it of constraint. The constraint was within; outwardly all was natural and unaffected. At times, however, his attraction for solitude and meditation would draw him away from his noisy companions, and lead him to seek some quiet

nook where he might read or muse, or even indulge some innocent fancy of his own. Children learn much in their solitary diversions, more, perhaps, than where amusements are found for them or suggested to them. Their seeming idleness or purposeless occupation is by no means time wasted; often the meaning and moral of things are conveyed into the mind of a thoughtful child in this artless and unconscious manner. In the spiritual order and the life of grace this also holds good; and we know that there is a special gift of the Holy Ghost, the gift of science, which enables the soul to rise through created things to the Invisible Creator. In this process, doubtless, He gently and sweetly accommodates Himself to age and capacity. It is related of Jean-Baptiste that he was one day found by a friend engaged in blowing at a feather. With a feeling of surprise, no doubt, at detecting a boy of his serious character diverting himself with so childish a sport, he said, "How can you find amusement in blowing a feather about?" On this occasion young Muard condescended to justify himself, a thing he was not in the habit of doing. "Did you," he replied, "never read that St. John himself used to play with a tame partridge?"

The journey to which we have alluded was not the only journey on which the Curé sent Jean-Baptiste. He had great confidence in him, and used often to commission him to teach the Catechism to children and help to prepare them for their first communion in other parishes, of which there were a great number at that period without pastors of their own. Many of these children, when grown up, still remembered the kindness, patience, and zeal with which the young apostle instructed them in the principles of the faith and set before them the ad-

vantages of piety. M. Rolley would also select him to teach the Catechism at Pacy when the duties of his ministry took him away to officiate in one or other of the five or six parishes under his care. Jean-Baptiste was not, however, the only one of his pupils whom from time to time he thus employed; for M. Rolley's presbytery had become quite a preparatory training-school for the Petit Séminaire of Auxerre, to which he presented for admission a certain number of his scholars every year. These youths had not only been furnished with the requisite amount of learning, but had been formed to the exercises of a religious life by prayer and meditation in common before the daily Mass, and again in the evening by spiritual reading, a visit to the Blessed Sacrament at a fixed hour, recitation of the Rosary, and similar holy practices. How excellent his system was is proved by its results; for twelve, at the very least, of his former pupils attained to the dignity of the priesthood. This tribute of praise is due to a worthy and indefatigable priest who was thus the instrument of making to the Church the most costly of presents. But, indeed, the name of the Abbé Rolley would deserve a place in our grateful memories if it were only for that one good work of his, the having discovered and favoured the vocation of Jean-Baptiste Muard.

CHAPTER II.

At the Petit Séminaire.

The opposition of his parents had, as testified by one of his own brothers, been overcome by Jean-Baptiste's

firmness and perseverance, coupled with the unvarying sweetness and tenderness of his behaviour to them. Still the pecuniary difficulties attendant on his projected career had not been satisfactorily disposed of, and what was impossible, they could allege, must not be expected of them. God, however, who had filled the heart of this youth with the longing desire to dedicate himself to His service, was sure not to disappoint his fervent hopes. The obstacles were finally removed. The circumstances of the family became somewhat bettered, which enabled them to meet the small outlay needed on their part. The Curé and the Seminary supplied the rest. Accordingly, in the month of September, 1823, Jean-Baptiste entered the Petit Séminaire of Auxerre, to which he was presented for admission by his master, M. Rolley, the Curé of Pacy-sur-Armançon. He was justly proud of his pupil. "I bring you today," he said, "one who is but a little child, yet already a great saint." If not a saint, he had certainly within him the germ and promise of very high sanctity. What has been related of his boyish days is sufficient to prove this. He had spent about three years under M. Rolley's tutelage, and we have the testimony of survivors that he was, not only beloved by all his companions, but greatly respected by them. At the Petit Séminaire his virtues were to have a wider sphere for their exercise. One of his fellow-students, who entered it two years later, says that it was easy for him to know and appreciate at once the piety of young Muard. From the first he regarded him as a saint, indeed he was commonly designated at the seminary as "the good and holy Muard". Sometimes he would be laughingly called Père Bruno. Yet all who are good and devout are not invariably endowed with the winning disposi-

tion and manners of Jean-Baptiste. Another of his associates declares, "He was most pious and most engaging; being especially remarkable for a gentle gaiety and a perfect evenness of temper".

A Benedictine Father, who had been one of his fellow-students, writing half a century later, bears a similar testimony, and speaks of the singular influence which young Muard exercised over his companions. Grave and serious as was his character, it was nevertheless, he says, most winning and gracious. He describes him as having about him such a charm of amiability, such a holy fascination, as engaged at once the esteem, the confidence, and the sympathy of both his fellow-students and his teachers. "What sweetness in his smile, and in his very look!" There was nothing austere in his piety, which was sincere, frank, and cordial. No wonder, then, that his young associates were irresistibly drawn to him, not excepting those boisterous, mirth-loving youths, good at heart, but given to rude practical joking, who are to be found even in a Petit Séminaire; they, too, felt the spell of his attraction.

Jean-Baptiste, we have said, was of a serious disposition. He had a clear and abiding perception of the great end of life, as well as of the particular object before his own individual mind, together with the bearing on that object of every step he took or proposed to take. We have seen what that object was—the following out of his sacerdotal vocation. Seminaries, which prepare ministers for the sanctuary, had, he perceived, a double aim: to impart divine and human science to their *alumni*, and to train them to the practice of Christian and sacerdotal virtues. The priest must be learned and he must be holy. To the acquiring, then, of these two qualifications, science and sanctity, he addressed him-

self at once with all the persevering ardour which distinguished him. Good and thoughtful youths, no doubt, commonly understand and realize the purpose for which they are sent to school or college, and strive with a good will to second the views of those who send them. But it is rare, perhaps, to find in a boy of fourteen, as was Jean-Baptiste's age when he entered,—not to speak of him at a still earlier period,—so strong a grasp of the momentous ends set before him. His intense realization of them never forsook him for a moment. It is in the nature of that careless age to be diverted—at least in times of recreation—to other thoughts; and to relax from that immediate, earnest solicitude which we look for in the parents but which we hardly expect should never flag or be temporarily suspended in their young sons, however well disposed they may be. But it was otherwise with Jean-Baptiste; and the same fellow-student whose testimony has been quoted above makes the following pertinent observation: "He had the maturity of age and the amiability of youth". He had, he says, but one object in his studies, to attain to the priesthood, and that with the single view of the glory of God and the salvation of souls; and he was as eminent for his success in study as for his advance in virtue. What he stated he could affirm from his own personal knowledge and from the joint evidence of all his associates. We must not omit to mention also the testimony of his companions to his ardent and continual aspirations after missionary labours among the heathen. He often spoke on the subject to them in glowing terms, but how many and fervent were his secret offerings of himself to God for this work and for martyrdom itself, is known only to the Searcher of hearts. The Association for the Propagation of the

Faith, recently established, immediately engaged his eager attention, and we find this poor scholar subscribing for the *Annales* as early as the year 1825, and reading them with avidity.

There are youths who will work very hard and very perseveringly from the spirit of emulation and from the natural desire of the human heart to excel, a desire seldom altogether absent even where purer motives coexist, but Jean-Baptiste, so far from desiring proficiency for the sake of pre-eminence over competitors, was even pained and confused when his name was publicly announced as first in the distribution of prizes. "I remember," says the fellow-student first quoted, "that when I congratulated him he replied that he attributed all to God." His abilities were certainly excellent, but they were not of that brilliant order which carries everything before it without trouble or labour. All agree that he was indebted for his very remarkable success mainly to his close and unwearying application. At every stage of his studies his progress became more and more remarkable. In rhetoric he carried off nearly all the prizes, and that he stood high in Latin poetry is proved by the fact that when the taking of Algiers was selected for the thesis his piece was not only without all comparison the best, but was even judged worthy of being printed. Owing, probably, to the haste with which the seminary broke up in consequence of the critical state of political affairs in the summer of 1830, which was quickly followed by the Revolution of July, this specimen of his talent has been lost, but another copy of complimentary lines addressed to the Duc d'Angoulême, when he passed through Auxerre not long before that date, remains as a proof of his merit and facility in this line of composition.

But these are secondary matters; the great object of a seminary is, while not neglecting human science, to train the young pupils for ecclesiastical functions by the study of religion and the practice of virtue. Penetrated with this conviction, it was to these that Jean-Baptiste directed his most assiduous attention and endeavours. His observance of the rule was perfect, and, in particular, that of the law of silence. That nothing could induce him to infringe it was notorious, as the following little anecdote will show. It also furnishes an example of the respect with which his fellow-students treated him. They were in the habit of calling each other by their names, according to the custom of other schoolboys; it was therefore the more remarkable, that in the case of young Muard, whose rank in life, certainly, did not entitle him to any exceptional politeness, they should often, in speaking of him, have called him "Monsieur". "I had occasion," says the priest who held the office of Moderator at the Petit Séminaire, "to reprimand one of the students for infringing the rule of silence at the time of study. He replied that most assuredly there had been a mistake. 'How could I possibly talk? I had the wall on one side of me and Monsieur Muard on the other, with whom it would be less easy to converse than with the wall.'"

The influence of young Muard over his companions was very great. "Not content," says one of them, "with being himself a living model, he exercised over us a sort of supervision, which we liked, and which fortified us in what was good." In particular he mentions that he used strongly to exhort them to visit the Blessed Sacrament, and, if they failed in doing so at any time, he would suggest their imposing some slight penance on themselves. But all this did not satisfy

his zeal. After well pondering the matter and, above all, making it the subject of earnest prayer, he proceeded, after the example of St. Aloysius Gonzaga, to form a little society, or congregation, among his fellow-students for specially honouring the Blessed Mother of God and promoting their own sanctification. A copy of the rule which he drew up for the members, and which has been preserved, reveals in every line the ardent charity, deep humility, and precocious wisdom of this holy youth. Its first article dedicates the association to the special honour of Jesus and Mary, and designates for its principal patrons St. Joseph, St. Aloysius Gonzaga, and St. Stanislas Kostka. The second requires from all who enter it a lively desire to labour after perfection. They were to say daily a portion of the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin, two of them uniting so as to recite the whole every day. The associates were to meet once, or oftener, every week to confer on the means of advancing in perfection, but they were to do nothing peculiar which would attract the notice of the rest, and were to be distinguished only by their scrupulous fidelity to the rules of the seminary and by their observance of silence, which was to be interior as well as exterior. Modesty of demeanour, humility, as of those who were walking in the presence of God, a sweet and cordial charity towards their brethren, an eye continually fixed on Jesus crucified, a tender love for Him in His Adorable Sacrament, and a filial devotion to His most holy Mother were specially urged upon them. They were to regard it as a duty to forgive all contempt and injuries, saying with joy a *Pater* and *Ave* for him who had insulted or offended them; and in this rule we may see the prelude to that which in after life he himself practised in an

heroic degree. Another clause is equally characteristic of him, as marking the perpetual aspiration of his soul: "They shall ardently entreat Heaven to raise up men powerful in word and work to rekindle the torch of faith which is well-nigh extinguished among us".

The points most insisted upon throughout this document, which was drawn up when he was only sixteen years of age, are the love of God, zeal for the salvation of souls, penance, and humility. These four virtues were to continue to be the aim of all his efforts through life, and the means for their acquisition the same as those on which he now relied: an ardent devotion to the Blessed Virgin, perseverance in prayer, and the might of association. The might of association! Truly that power has something mysterious in it. The two or three gathered together must not be taken as numerically two or three. The numbers must rather be multiplied into each other than added together. This little society had very modest beginnings, and was quite unpretentious in its character, but God alone knows what were the results of the pious conversations of these young seminarists. "To this day," says the Abbé Brullée, "this tree planted in secret by the hand of him who was already called the *saint of the seminary* continues to bear manifest fruits of benediction." The meetings mostly took place during the evening's recreation, but nothing was to be done which could prove of the least detriment to the community spirit or cause any isolation from their brethren. Accordingly, if a pupil not belonging to the association were to join the pious group, he was to be cordially welcomed, the immediate subject under discussion was to be quietly dropped, and the conversation turned to some other edifying topic.

The weekly walk into the country taken by the seminarists furnished the opportunity for larger gatherings. As they went along they would recite in common part of the Little Office of Our Lady, or join in some other devotion to the honour of their good Mother in Heaven. Then, seated in some secluded rural spot, they would listen to a short sermon prepared by one of the most advanced of the fraternity, most frequently, as we may conclude, by their leader, Jean-Baptiste, young Boyer, however, sometimes replacing him. His apostolic zeal was already at work, for we find him occupying his spare time in composing a number of simple discourses fitted for inspiring the country-people with the love of God and attracting them to the practice of their religious duties. He also addressed long letters to his mother, whose conversion he had deeply at heart. At the period of his first communion, when only eleven years of age, he had longed to have her kneeling by him at the altar, but it was not until the second year of his stay at the Petit Séminaire, that is, five years later, that he was to enjoy the consolation of his mother's return to the practice of her religious duties. Her heart had never been estranged from God, and her son's influence and example had been gradually working on her. She used to make her youngest son read aloud his brother's letters to a number of the village-women collected to work together during the long winter evenings. They were listened to with the greatest interest; many, we are told, being often moved even to tears. Her conversion, when once effected, was entire and enduring. For the rest of her life she was the source of edification to all her neighbours, and became, one may say, the apostle in a quiet way of her little village; so that, when she died, her son thought

it no exaggeration to engrave upon her tomb, *Timebat Dominum valde, et non erat qui loqueretur de ea verbum malum.* He was to wait many years before he saw the conversion of his other parent, but this also was in the end granted to his prayers. It took place during the period that he was head of the diocesan missionaries at Pontigny, and his father was living at Taulay. Being taken seriously ill he apprized his son, who hastened to his bed-side, and had the happiness of reconciling him to God three weeks before his death. Grace had worked a wonderful change in his heart. Occupied no longer with earth or earthly things, he was entirely absorbed in the thoughts of Heaven; and his son was often heard to say that he entertained no doubts of the salvation of his dear father's soul.

Vacation time is sometimes rather time lost to the student; time, at least, which has to be made up for on his return to the work and discipline of the seminary. But more than this; it is sometimes, in a measure, a perilous time to the spiritual interests of the aspirant to a higher state. The young student, finding himself once more in the home circle, surrounded by all its old fond associations and besieged by the distractions of family life and of secular sociabilities, is liable to suffer from this relaxing atmosphere, if he be not even in some cases unconsciously tempted to acquiesce in a lower grade of perfection than would be required by his ecclesiastical calling. At any rate, this season may be considered as a test of the solidity of a vocation, and, as such, has its uses. That of Jean-Baptiste triumphantly stood the ordeal, which, indeed, to him was none. No time was ever lost time to him, who had never had but one serious object in life before him; nothing could distract him, because nothing had any

interest or attraction for him which had no bearing upon, or could not be utilised for, the furtherance of that object. This did not prevent him from joining in any cheerful recreation with his family, but he preferred those in which piety could be combined with pleasure. Pilgrimages had a special charm for him; the love of them may be said to be a truly Catholic instinct; and, young as he was, he fully appreciated their value for the sanctification of souls, and as an open and public profession of faith. He knew also that from these privileged places virtue went forth, as it did, while He was on earth, from the garments of the Divine Redeemer, in the form of multifold blessings to those who devoutly visited them.

There was an ancient and celebrated sanctuary within accessible distance of Vireaux, that of Sainte Reine,* greatly frequented in the middle ages and even down to the eighteenth century, when St. Vincent de Paul founded a hospice there. Of late years this ancient pilgrimage has begun to revive. Jean-Baptiste made it on foot several times, in company with some of his fellow-students and his old master, M. Rolley, whom we find on one occasion exercising his former pupil in the spirit of mortification; for, the party being much fatigued and having stopped to refresh themselves at a way-side inn, Jean-Baptiste made a grimace upon tasting the beer presented to them; seeing which, M. Rolley, knowing well with whom he had to deal, poured him out a glass of something much more bitter and desired him to drink it, which he did at once to repair his momentary weakness. Whence M. Rolley produced this penitential liquor, or whether there were two kinds

* Ste. Reine was martyred, at the age of 17, in the year 253.

of beer, one more nauseous than the other, does not appear. Another of young Muard's practices during his vacations was, with the sanction and, indeed, at the desire of the Curé of Pacy, to assemble all the children of his native village and catechize them. Books were not cast aside by him at this season, as they are by so many youths, who thus lose much of the fruit of their past labours; for, although he did not read so assiduously as when at the seminary, yet he took care to read enough to keep himself up, at least, to the point which he had attained, and thus be better prepared to resume his place when the classes should be re-opened.

One of his young friends who used often to see him at that time, wrote thus to the Abbé Brullée, when he was collecting materials for his biography: "Sometimes we worked together, and, though I was much his inferior in abilities and in knowledge, he always tried to let me seem to surpass him". It was not from flattery that he thus acted, but from charity and from a deep sense of humility, which veiled his own merit from himself. "Where," he continues, "could a seminarist in vacation time be met with as exemplary as he was? Always gentle, always kind, always humble, always amiable, he was the joy of his parents, the edification of his parish, and of his very pastor himself. He was always happy when he could in any way please the Father, and regarded it as a signal honour to serve him at the altar, which he did with an angelic piety. What more can I say? Were I to attempt to relate all the beautiful sayings and all the good actions of our virtuous friend, I should much exceed the limits of a letter. I will therefore add but one word, and that word will include his whole life. The Abbé Muard during his vacations was perfect, as he was at the

seminary, as he was subsequently, and as he always was."

To sum up the witness borne to his virtues while he was a student at the Petit Séminaire of Auxerre, we will conclude with the valuable testimony of one who was his superior there for three years, and afterwards became Vicar-General of Tours, the Abbé Bruchet, himself a very holy man. It is extracted from a letter written immediately after P. Muard's death. "I also had the happiness of being edified by his admirable example during the three years that the R. P. Muard passed under my direction at the Petit Séminaire of Auxerre. I can affirm that, out of a large number of virtuous youths who have now become the edification of many parishes, no one has left on my mind a deeper impression than he whose memory you so justly desire to honour. Already, young as he was, he had begun to practise all the virtues which he afterwards carried to so high a perfection and which distinguished him amongst his friends and fellow-students. Already we saw him always the same: kind, charitable, assiduous in the practice of all his duties, mortified and penitent, a man of prayer, full of the love of God and of His Church, and enhancing so many excellent qualities by a profound humility, which did not allow him to notice them or permit others to notice them. Notwithstanding his youth, he was a model of patience; he possessed his soul in peace. Here, Monsieur, is a portion of what I was able to observe in him at an age when the best still manifest so many imperfections. As for him, at sixteen he was already a pattern for those who lived with him. He was truly the perfect seminarist. Accordingly, nothing has surprised me which I have heard of his exalted virtues and excel-

lent works; all in him announced the future Apostle of his diocese and the founder of those religious retreats which he governed for too short a time. Let us hope, nevertheless, that he has sown seeds which will not perish, but which will develop themselves with time, and with aid from above. . . . God has taken him from us, being consummated in all good; in his adolescence he did nothing puerile, as the Holy Spirit said of a virtuous person, and in a brief time he completed the circle of a great and holy career: *Consummatus in brevi explevit tempora multa.*"*

In conclusion, we may say that the proficiency of young Muard while he was at the Petit Séminaire was the more remarkable because his studies underwent a considerable interruption, owing to a serious malady, a brain-fever, with which he was attacked and which nearly brought him to the brink of the grave. Extreme Unction was about to be administered to him, when he rallied. Speaking in after years of this illness, he observes how very careful people in attendance on the sick ought to be as to what they say in their hearing, when they believe them to be in a state of unconsciousness. They may be unable to move their lips or give any sign of life, and yet may hear perfectly well the conversations going on by their bedside. Such, at least, was his experience, and we believe it to be by no means a solitary instance.

* "Being made perfect in a short space, he fulfilled a long time."—Wisdom iv. 13.

CHAPTER III.

At the Grand Séminaire. Reception of the Sub-diaconate.

Young Muard had finished his course of humanities brilliantly in the year 1830, but the Revolution which broke out in Paris at the close of the month of July caused the seminary to be dissolved in a very hurrried manner, so that there was no public distribution of prizes that year, and the pupils made their way back to their families with all possible speed. That political convulsion, which unchained so many anti-religious passions, shook not a few vocations and wrecked some altogether. But Jean-Baptiste was one whose resolution could only be strengthened, had that been possible, by such an event. The more the Church was outraged and its clergy calumniated, the more strongly did he feel himself urged to consecrate himself to its service, for to live and die for God was the one desire of his heart. He spent his vacations, as usual, with his family at Vireaux, looking forward, however, with a kind of holy impatience to the important step which was before him; for he was now to pass on to the Grand Séminaire of Sens, and enter upon the more immediate preparation for the ecclesiastical state, the study of philosophy and theology. He was punctual in presenting himself on the day fixed by his superiors in the month of October, but a great disappointment awaited him. Several of his fellow-students in the Petit Séminaire, who had aspired to the priesthood, and who were to have entered the Grand Séminaire at the same time as himself, were not there. They had put their hand to the plough, but had looked back.

The Revolution had frightened them, or, if it had not frightened themselves, it had alarmed their parents, who no longer saw in the ecclesiastical career a promising or profitable profession for their sons, and had prevailed upon them to remain in the world. But, what was still more distressing, some even who had preceded him at the Grand Séminaire, had not returned. The Revolution of July had unfortunately given a new turn to their ideas. The cause of God seemed a losing cause, and this had weighed with these timid souls.

These defections among his friends caused young Muard deep pain, and the more so as they must have been quite unexpected. There was nothing in him which corresponded with such half-heartedness, or vacillation of purpose, and hence his generous soul would give others credit for a firmness of resolve which they did not possess. He was consequently much distressed at the desertion of so many whom he had known and of whom he had hoped far better things; but it did not produce the least effect upon himself, nor would the defection of the whole seminary have made any difference with him. The little boy who had the courage to kneel down when all his schoolfellows rebelled and stood upright, was not changed now that he had grown to be a young man. He was very sorry for the defaulters, but the serenity of his own soul remained undisturbed. Neither did he disquiet himself for what was passing outside the Grand Séminaire. He had no fears for the future, knowing that all depended on God. He contented himself with saying, as on such occasions he was wont to say, "God has His own views and designs"; after which he dismissed the subject from his mind and turned his thoughts to something else.

He was entering now on his course of philosophy with that close application which he brought to bear on all his studies, but which is particularly needed where so large a call is made on the mental powers. He was also deeply convinced of the great importance of a solid grounding in philosophy, which he regarded as the pedestal of all the theological studies. He saw that it imparts to the mind the clear knowledge of first principles, and teaches the how and the why of things. It is for lack of good philosophic instruction that so many men are to be met with deficient in reasoning and in logic, and liable to be led away to embrace unsound opinions of which they do not perceive the dangerous consequences. The philosophic course, however, has its perils for the pious student. The intellectual work which it involves is sometimes, as the Abbé Brullée observes, "fatal to piety, and the effect of it, unless the strictest precautions are adopted, is to dry up the heart"; but it did not prejudice in the least young Muard's progress in virtue, as we may see from the following passage, dated March 24, 1831, when he was in the midst of his philosophic course. "Thou callest me, O my God, Thou callest me; I hear Thy divine voice in the depth of my heart. Thou willest that I should give myself to Thee in a special manner, that I should renounce everything, that I should renounce myself, to love and serve Thee alone. Blessed be Thou, O my sweetest Jesus, for being pleased, notwithstanding my extreme unworthiness and the greatness of my crimes, to fix Thy merciful eyes on the most guilty and abominable of Thy creatures. Ah! no doubt, Thou desirest to give to sinners an example in my person of Thy infinite goodness and mercy." He then beseeches his Saviour to complete in him the work

which His grace had begun in his soul by kindling in its depths the sacred fire of His love, which is, he says, as yet, very weak. For the increase of this love he fervently prays, and for more charity towards the poor. "Detachment from all creatures, self-abnegation, mortification, the love of sufferings, humility, immovable fortitude; to regard myself before God as a poor orphan, abandoned by all the world, and having the Lord only for my support, to cherish contempt, humiliations, and sacrifice all to God, goods, honour, reputation—such," he says, "are my dearest desires." Then follows a renewal of his dedication of himself to Mary, in view of her coming feast. "Let us renew to-morrow our consecration to Mary, and may the day when she received into her bosom the Saviour of the world, from whence begins to date upon earth the sacrifice of the Man-God, be for me the beginning of an entirely new and holy life."

It may surprise some to find this blameless youth speaking of himself as the blackest of sinners. Yet such has ever been the language of saints and of perfect souls. It is the unaffected utterance of their hearts, beholding themselves, as they do, in presence of the splendours of Eternal Truth and Purity; and, moreover, they have always regarded themselves as so much the more culpable before the infinite Majesty of God in that they have received such clear illumination and such abundant graces from the Divine Goodness. Young Muard used to weep over, and inflict severe penances upon himself for, faults, as he considered them, which others would not even have noticed in themselves or would have certainly considered as very slight matter for self-reproach. We find him soon after, as he was approaching his twenty-second

birthday, speaking of himself as "a monster of ingratitude," and of his past years as a tissue of abominations. How many young seminarists and religious, he exclaims, were saints at his age! whereas he had spent twenty-two years in forgetfulness, nay, in contempt of God, who had never ceased pouring such rich blessings upon him. "Why delayest thou, O my soul?" he says. "Why continue to hesitate? Wherefore all these reservations? Let us give all, and give it irrevocably. Yes, my God, I give Thee all that I am, and, above all, my will; take all, Lord, and leave me nothing, provided Thou wilt give me Thy grace. Command me to go to the heart of China or of America, and I fly thither; command me to remain here as a missionary, and I will remain; to be a parish-priest, and such I will abide; let me be sick, languishing, incapable of anything, and I submit; strike me, in fine, in whatever manner Thou pleasest, and I will kiss the Hand which strikes me."

To speak of the love and veneration entertained for young Muard at the Grand Séminaire would be but to repeat, only still more emphatically, what has been stated of the estimation in which he was held at the Petit Séminaire; and here, too, we find him the leader and animating spirit of pious associations similar to those which have been already described. His superiors were pleased to admit him to the first step in the clerical order on the 28th of May, 1831, after he had completed his course of philosophy. With what devotion he prepared himself for and received the ecclesiastical tonsure we might well conceive, even had he not left in writing a record of his holy thoughts, desires, and resolutions. They breathe the same spirit of humility, abnegation, self-distrust, penance, and longing

aspiration after the most ardent love of God and closest union with Him, which formed the basis of his whole spiritual life, and which, in one mode or another, was continually manifesting itself in word or act. At vacation time he returned to his family wearing the ecclesiastical habit without fear. It was not in honour with the world at that juncture, but to him it little mattered what men might say of him. All, however, passed off well at Vireaux, and not one unpleasant observation was made on the subject. On his return to the Seminary he began his study of theology; and here we must not omit to mention an illusion, as he himself called it, or, at any rate, a mistake into which he was betrayed, and which retarded his progress for a whole year. The mistake, we may add, was one which none but a very holy man was likely to have made. We will record it in his own words.

"I had begun my theology and was studying with ardour this science which was new to me, when a good and holy thought struck me, and took possession of my mind. I said to myself, I must become a great saint. But to become a saint, one of the best means is to have always present to the mind our Lord upon His cross, in order to encourage us to bear our own, and to excite us to sorrow for our sins. Unwilling to lose sight of our crucified Lord, and that, not only during devotional exercises, but even while at study, I used, instead of learning my lesson of theology and acquitting myself well of this duty, to be thinking of our Lord hanging upon the cross. It was only at the end of this year's theology that I perceived I had fallen into the greatest illusion, that I had been the sport of the devil, and that he had succeeded, under a plausible pretext, in making me lose my time." It is P. Benoit to whom

in after years he related this singular circumstance, and who has preserved the remembrance of it, mentioning also the occasion which led P. Muard to make him. this confidence. "We were conversing one day," he says, "on the subject of illusions, and how easily we may become the victims of them. St. Ignatius Loyola was named as having himself fallen under the power of one. In fact, we read in his Life that, when he began to conjugate the Latin verb *amo*, he always added *Deum*. He perceived, at last, that this was a distraction to hinder him from studying. From that moment he conjugated it without adding *Deum* after every word. 'A person,' observed P. Muard, 'must have made some progress in mystical science to perceive that this was an illusion.' And then he related to me in detail that into which he had himself fallen at the Grand Séminaire of Sens, and which made him lose a year of theology."

Some other remarks of P. Benoit, who, as having enjoyed his full confidence and been so closely associated with him for many years, is a most valuable authority, are of sufficient importance to be here recorded. "Never had I," he said to me one day, "the slightest doubt with regard to my vocation; nevertheless, while following it, I experienced interiorly two attractions which struggled with each other; they were both of them good. The one drew me to embrace a penitential life, to go and bury myself alive in some solitude, there to devote myself in expiation for my own faults and the faults of sinners. Should I be a penitent religious? Should I be a Trappist? I knew not, but I had already begun to feel within me an immense need of sacrifice. This feeling," he added, "was strongly opposed by another, the object of which was also

sacrifice. In the depth of my heart I felt a longing to devote myself in an active ministry to the salvation of my brethren's souls, who forfeit them with such thoughtless gaiety. The idea of missions was already beginning to occupy my mind. Another ardent desire had obtained possession of my heart, the desire of martyrdom." This desire, which, as we have seen, had not newly arisen, but dated from his very childhood, was to grow in strength as he advanced in life. He was continually beseeching our Lord to grant him this grace; for the love of Jesus truly consumed him, as its irrepressible expression would occasionally prove. "When I was at home with my family," says P. Benoit, "in the beginning of 1843, at the time when he was preaching a mission at Sermizelles, and was one day at the presbytery in company with several devout persons, he said to us, 'I should like to be cut up into bits for the love of our Lord'. One felt from the tone of his voice that he was speaking from the fulness of his heart."

The root of the two desires which combated each other within him, the desire of austere penance and that of sacrificing himself for the salvation of souls, was, then, the same, viz. the love of our Lord deeply planted in his heart. Notwithstanding their intensity and apparent practical contradiction, they never disturbed the tranquillity of his soul, for his desires, however strong, were always moderate, perhaps we ought rather to say moderated. They were always under his control; they never got the better of him, or made him act in an impulsive way, or seek to attain his object at any cost, and without giving reasonable attention to obstacles and difficulties. There could, possibly, be no better proof that these movements came from God, who, we might almost say, respects the work

of His own hands, and never disturbs the balance of the rational nature, or does violence to the free will of man. Even in the case of the high and miraculous gifts of His Spirit, those who have been their recipients have never been possessed through their influx like the demoniacs of false religions. "The spirits of the prophets," says the Apostle, "are subject to the prophets. For God is not the God of dissension, but of peace."* Man, it is true, when receiving strong touches of grace, may mingle the alloy of his own eager and impetuous nature with the true gold of divine charity, but this is not God's work and, so far as it goes, tends to mar and hinder it. Jean-Baptiste escaped this danger by never giving the reins to nature; neither was he over solicitous to solve at once his spiritual perplexities; he was contented to work on day by day, praying continually that God would make known His will regarding his special vocation, and patiently waiting until light should be vouchsafed to him.

His close application to the work now before him soon made up for the time that he had lost. We have a valuable record, written by him at that period, of his high estimate of the different branches of ecclesiastical science and his appreciation of their relative importance. He places in the first rank the study of Holy Scripture. "It is there," he says, "that the Word, hiding Himself under the veil of letters, inspires the noblest sentiments, warms the heart, and reveals the most solid and touching truths." He wished to apply himself daily to this study of God's Word with a respectful attention, seeking therein the food of his soul, and reading it on his knees. He gave the next place to theology.

* 1. Cor. xiv. 33.

He considered it to be essential for a priest to be thoroughly instructed in dogmatic theology, in order to be prepared to defend the truths of our holy religion against all innovators, and to be able to expound them clearly to the people. This science is a bulwark to faith, which it fortifies, and in it are contained the true principles of all morality. As the priest is to be the judge of consciences and the physician of souls, he ought to be also well versed in moral theology, which is entirely practical in its bearing, and of daily application.

As to mystical theology, he was already strongly impressed with its importance, and he was often heard in after times deeply to lament the little account made of it. His opinion on this subject is well worthy of note. He believed that a certain acquaintance with it is useful to all, but that it is indispensably necessary to those who are called to guide others; being convinced, moreover, that the persons to whom such guidance would be most advantageous are greater in number than is usually supposed. The Fathers, Doctors, and all the Saints esteemed mystical theology to be the queen of sciences, since it draws us as near to God as is possible here below. It is the school of sanctity, opening as it does those luminous paths which conduct the soul to the heights of the holy mount of perfection. It is rare not to find in every parish a certain number of persons drawn to something more generous than the simple observance of the commandments. These persons will be conscious of aspirations which they cannot clearly define, and in this vague, indeterminate state such aspirations are likely to remain, if no intelligent preacher or director should interpret to them the meaning of these movements of

grace, and guide them on the way to the practice of the evangelical counsels. Poor sinners, some may say, ought not to be sacrificed to these privileged souls, but neither should these privileged souls be sacrificed to sinners, which will be the probable result if the avoidance of sin be made the exclusive subject of pastoral instruction. Perfection, whatever that may be, will be supposed to be something reserved for the religious and ecclesiastical state, the laity being in no way concerned therewith. Thus, much is lost for the glory of God and the good of souls very dear to Him; for St. Francis de Sales did not scruple to say that one fervent soul gives more glory to God than do a thousand negligent and lukewarm Christians. Whoever, then, would become the guide to others and point the way to the holy mount must know it himself, theoretically, if not practically. Hence the value which the future preacher of Missions set upon the study of that science which concerns the ways of perfection.

He was also of opinion that it was very advantageous to a priest to be familiar with the writings of the Greek and Latin Fathers. Long before the discussion relative to Pagan classics and to the Christian literature of the early centuries arose, he used to express his regret at the small space allotted to the latter in the course of study at the junior seminaries. He did not like the young aspirant to the sacerdotal state being nourished exclusively upon heathen fables. He thought it must be detrimental to piety and to the taste for heavenly things, and that whatever might be gained in the matter of literary form and style could never compensate for so serious a loss. Not that he desired that the Pagan classics should be excluded from the curriculum, he only objected to the preponderance given to them.

"As it is desirable," we are quoting his own words, "that priests should not be strangers to letters and to those human sciences which men of the world so assiduously cultivate, some portion of the day may be devoted to them, but without prejudice to the studies which are specially connected with their vocation."

Among these special studies he reckoned also that of the Liturgy. Devotion to the Liturgy of the Church may be regarded as one of the indications of a genuine Catholic mind and spirit. So much is implied in this devotion; and the priest is its proper guardian and exponent. This holy man, when he had entered on the sacerdotal office, always respected the minutest rubrics of the Church, none being in his eyes either trifling or unmeaning; to all, therefore, he gave the most scrupulous attention. Ecclesiastical music and singing shared his solicitude; he had a love and value, in short, for everything connected with divine worship. Acquaintance with ecclesiastical history he reckoned to be very necessary for a priest; and, as he found it impossible to set apart any special time for its study in the course of the day, he made a point of listening attentively to its reading at refection time, as was the practice at the seminary. He was quite willing to forego a portion of his meal that he might not lose a word, for it was not always easy to hear distinctly; and, in order the better to fix the subject in his memory, he induced some of his associates in whom he had observed a taste for history to join with him in dedicating a recreation hour every week to the recapitulation of what had struck them most in the lection. A large range of most interesting subjects thus became matter of conversation and discussion.

He also read attentively the sermons of the most

eminent preachers of modern times. The subject of preaching, indeed, was one which occupied him much, always with reference to the same ultimate object, the efficiency of missionary labours. He composed as well as read sermons, learned some of them by heart, and used to deliver them in presence of a few of his friends whose opinions and criticisms he desired to know. When walking out with them he would exercise his voice, so as to be audible to them at the greatest possible distance, rendering them the same service in his turn. He has left a record of the criticism of his venerated superior, the Abbé Pétitier, on a sermon of his written during one of his vacation times, a task imposed on every seminarist at these seasons. It is in the form of short notes, which were intended simply for a personal memorandum. The subject of the sermon was the duty of parents to give their children a Christian education. "That is a good discourse. You are in the right way; go on; you are sure to please and instruct. The plan is good, the arrangement is good, and you have no lack of ideas; the developments are very natural, your style is extremely clear, and one can follow you with remarkable facility, which is a great merit. Your sermon, preached as it is, would, I am sure, produce much impression. I am satisfied with you, M. Muard. So much for praise. I will now make some observations. Your divisions are very natural, and you have taken the right line, but the motives in support of your arguments are not sufficiently drawn out. We must take men as they are; if they were all good Christians, what you have said might be enough, but most of your hearers are far removed from being such. These you must attract through their interest, and show them that a Christian

education can alone bring up happy families. They wish their children to be moral; show them that religion alone can secure this advantage." After a few more observations in this line, tending to show him what was deficient in his sermon, and that it was desirable, not only to point out the hatefulness of vice, but to enlarge on the loveliness of the opposite virtues, and after recommending him to shorten a description of a young man in hell reproaching his father with having brought him up ill and thus plunged him in this misery, he adds, "You enlarge too much on the subject of places of amusement and dances. If people had, generally speaking, a bad opinion of these things, it would be all very well, but, unfortunately, in France we have by no means arrived at that point. Play-houses and dancing-rooms are looked upon as places of dissipation, but no more. It would be well, then, if, while attributing nothing further than what fathers and mothers perceive in them, you were to show that, granting even that the danger was no greater than they suppose, the frequenting of them may, and certainly will, be the ruin of their children's souls. The remainder of the Abbé Pétitier's observations regard style and those descriptive and pictorial powers which enable a preacher to impress the imagination of his audience. "A picture," he says, "ought to suggest many ideas in few words," but to produce such pictures must, he allows, be the work of time.

Without having seen the sermon in question, one may readily conclude from the comments made upon it that its faults were those into which youth is apt to fall, a certain crudity and lack of discreet moderation. Alluding to this critique in after years, he was heard to say, "Monsieur l'Abbé Pétitier made an observation to

me of which I have since fully realized the justice. 'You have to be on your guard,' he says, 'against a declamatory style; you would be inclined to it both from your natural disposition and from the line you have adopted. If you will read over your Instruction again you will yourself be convinced of this; and, when you have acquired experience, you will realize still better the truth of what I say.'" After the founding of his monastery at the Pierre-qui-Vire, P. Muard observed, "If I had more time to give to study, I should begin by burning all my Instructions, in order to re-write them; I know they are not what they ought to be". Having been launched immediately on leaving the seminary into parish work of much importance, including the visiting of distant and dispersed hamlets, his time (he said) had been entirely engrossed by his ministerial duties to the prejudice of his studies. His subsequent appointment to a parish in a large town left him no greater amount of leisure. But the solicitude to improve his preaching, which we see beginning while yet he was only preparing for minor orders, and even previously, never abated, and we observe an instance of it in the pleasure with which he welcomed a proposal made to him, while Curé of Joux-la-Ville, by a neighbouring priest to meet him and another brother Curé every week, when they were each in his turn to read a discourse prepared beforehand, the others freely expressing their opinion. Yet to the end of his too short life he was never satisfied, having before him an unattained ideal, which nevertheless he hoped to see realized some day among the Benedictine Preachers of his community. It may be well here to mention what that ideal was. He desired that the words a preacher uttered and the form in which he presented what he said,

should be such as to pass unobserved, the truths he preached alone attracting the attention of his hearers; so that people should not speak of the beauty of a sermon, or its want of beauty, but that, as they left the church, they should say, "That is true. Let us do what the Missionary has told us." What we have here quoted in anticipation of his future career can hardly be viewed as a digression, serving as it does to illustrate the purity of the motives which from first to last prompted his efforts in this direction. To aim at attaining to eminence as a preacher would have been repugnant to his whole nature; his sole object was to gain more power for winning souls to God.

The Abbé Pétitier had the utmost confidence in young Muard, who, on his part, referred everything to his superior with filial submission. The latter was fully aware of the passionate desire to go on the Foreign Missions which filled his pupil's heart; and, while by no means discouraging so laudable an aspiration, he thought it well to engage him to keep his zeal in check, and strive to moderate its intensity. The venerable Superior of the Grand Séminaire at Sens was, it may be observed, a very holy man, himself a confessor of the faith, whose counsels were therefore all the more worthy of the respect with which they were sure to be be received by the humble seminarist placed under his charge. During the days of the Terror he had passed nearly a year in concealment in Le Morvand, having only his little Roman Breviary and his *Novum*, and this he said was "the happiest year of his life". He was not the only one of these surviving veterans of the days of persecution (of whom the diocese of Sens possessed several) that the young seminarist had the advantage of conferring with. Among them was M.

Soudais, Curé of Beugnon. Undaunted by the menacing aspect of affairs at the approach of the Revolution, he had entered the priesthood, and continued to administer his parish long after many of his *confrères* had taken the road of exile. It is related of him that he never displayed more of the calmness and frank cheerfulness habitual to him than on the morning when two *gens-d'armes* came to his presbytery to arrest him. "Welcome," he said; "in two minutes I shall be at your service. We will breakfast together, to make acquaintance, for henceforth you are my men." He was taken, with a number of his brethren, on board one of those floating prisons in which so many priests had to endure a prolonged martyrdom. During his detention he was the consolation of his companions by his unvarying cheerfulness and even gaiety, by his encouraging exhortations under suffering, and, above all, by his own pious example. To fortify and sustain them he even established a sort of ecclesiastical conference with his fellow-prisoners, to whom his unfailing acts of self-sacrifice and charity inexpressibly endeared him. Released at last, he returned to his little parish, where he lived, laboured, and died, refusing constantly all the brilliant offers of promotion which were made him. Such a man was after M. Muard's own heart, and he took the opportunity of his vacation-time in 1831 to go and pay him a visit.

On the 21st February, 1832, a few days after his superiors had intimated to him that he was to receive minor orders and the sub-diaconate, we find him writing to P. Soudais thus: "The very kind reception you gave me when M. N. had the goodness to take me to your house, as I was on the eve of returning to the seminary, produced too lively an impression for me

to be able to refrain from expressing my gratitude. I have never seen you but once, Monsieur, but I immediately realized the idea I had formed of a priest according to the heart of God. As my one desire is also to become a good priest, I felt constrained to recommend myself to you, and to implore the aid of your prayers respecting a vocation which must decide my eternal lot, for I have just received my call to the subdiaconate. When I consider that high dignity, the vows and engagements which accompany it, and the priesthood which will follow, with its duties and its dangers, I ask myself where are the virtues which I ought to bring to this sublime state, and I find within me only a dismal void. I have recourse, then, to all the good priests whom I know, and to you, Monsieur, in particular, conjuring you, by the love you bear to our Lord, to pray for a seminarist in so pressing a need, and to entreat for me the light, the spirit, and the sacerdotal virtues which I admired in your person, and, above all, a tender love for our Lord, in order that He may graciously accept the sacrifice which I hope to make of myself. In conclusion, Monsieur, I beg you to join my name with that of M. N. in your pious *Memento*. It will be another good work added to the treasure you have already laid up in Heaven. I have long been proposing to consult you about an affair which interests me deeply, and with respect to which it is extremely important to me that I should not decide wrongly: your lights and your experience will make me regard your judgment on this point as that of God Himself. The limits of a letter do not allow of my explaining myself any further to-day; besides, it is a matter which can only be treated of *viva voce*. The next vacation will I hope furnish me with the so much

desired opportunity of opening my heart to you on this subject." After apologizing for the liberty he has taken, he adds in a postscript, "The question which occupies me, and to which I allude at the close of my letter, has no reference to the sub-diaconate, as perhaps you might suppose, but to another determination consequent upon it".

This question for determination was, in fact, his project of diocesan missions, which the following notes written about this period, and headed, "Divers sentiments which I sometimes experience," serve to prove; showing at the same time that the idea of the foreign missions, although a call to them and the grace of martyrdom were the ultimate goal of what we may call his ambition, had by no means exclusive possession of his mind, which was becoming more and more intent on the thought of the religious and moral degradation of thousands, not to say millions, of his own compatriots. "When I reflect," he writes, "on the unbelief, the corruption, the ignorance, into which all classes of society in France are fallen, and almost everywhere else, I feel how much it is to be desired that God should draw from the treasures of His mercy men powerful in word and in work, who may kindle again amongst us the torch of faith and cause ancient virtues to flourish again, even as at different epochs He raised up a Francis of Assisi, a Dominic, a Vincent Ferrer, a Bernardine of Siena, an Ignatius, a Francis Xavier, a Francis Regis, a Francis de Sales, a Vincent de Paul. This thought awakens in me a boundless and indefinable desire to arrive at their sanctity, that I may do what they did. But when I cast a look back at myself, and consider my state of deplorable meanness, wretchedness, and weakness, I feel a little suspicious of

this sentiment, which does not seem to me sufficiently purified from the illusions of self-love; this is why I mistrust it. Nevertheless, I place it, with my heart, in the most holy Heart of Mary, my sovereign lady and mother, for her to deposit in the Sacred Heart of her Son, that He may cleanse them and deal with them according to His good pleasure."

Notwithstanding his complete self-abandonment into God's hands, he used to pass hours meditating on the prospects which his ardent charity rendered so attractive to him. "My God, my Jesus, my most holy Mother," he would say, "will be better known, loved, and served, poor sinners will arise from the abyss of their iniquities, and countless souls will be saved, by diocesan missions." Then the sublimity of the enterprise alarmed his sense of his own littleness, and he would have to encourage himself by such sentiments as these: "Reflect, O my soul, on what God requires of thee; humble thyself deeply at the sight of thine own meanness, but raise thyself above it. Walk with a firm and courageous step, leaning on the arm of thy Saviour, and supported by Mary, thy holy and august mother; march on towards the great end to which thou must attain; march on, march on, and fear nothing. The prospect of Heaven and, still more, the love of Jesus and of His holy Mother, which thou shalt enjoy to all eternity, will sustain thee. Courage, then, once more; courage, courage, O my soul, *Aspice finem.*" Then follow—for we have been quoting from his own memoranda written at the time—burning aspirations for more love of God, and entire union with Him. He knows well how that is to be accomplished; it is by the removal of all those obstacles which hinder this perfect union, every tie, whatever it may be, which keeps us, as it were, bound

down to earth; "to the earth which I abhor": such is his forcible expression. He concludes by conjuring his dear Saviour, by His five Wounds, which give us a right to ask what we please, to grant him this his desire and show forth the power of God in the feeblest of His creatures. He beseeches Him also to remember that His blessed Mother is his own also notwithstanding his unworthiness, and to listen to the ardent prayers she offers to Him for her adopted child. "O my Jesus," he exclaims, "O my amiable Saviour, I place all my confidence in Thee. Shall I, in truth, begin to-day to be all Thine, to serve Thee faithfully? Yes, I hope this indeed from Thy goodness."

Thus it was that Jean-Baptiste Muard prepared himself for the engagement into which he was about to enter by enrolling himself irrevocably under the banner of his Lord when receiving the sub-diaconate. No record of his sentiments on that great day has been found. Perhaps his heart was too full for him to write any.

CHAPTER IV.

Reception of Holy Orders.

This holy youth was always beginning anew. There were no spiritual vacations with him; no sitting down, as it were, to recover his breath, when the stage to which he had been pressing forward was reached, before making a fresh start. While awaiting the hour when he should be fully equipped to go forth and labour for souls, he continued to devote his energies to the work of rendering his own more perfect, and thus a more fitting instrument in the hands of his Lord. With this object he drew up a set of resolutions and a

plan of intentions for all the different occupations of the day. The summary which precedes, and which is headed "That which must form the basis of my general conduct," will give a sufficient insight into the high standard of perfection to which he aspired and the thorough self-control which it was his full purpose to exercise over himself; for we must recollect that with him resolutions were serious engagements which he felt bound to fulfil with the utmost exactness:—"Continual union with Jesus Christ. Offering of all my actions to God. Fidelity to all my duties. Sustained fervour in my devotional exercises. Love of study and of work. Holy employment of time. A vigilant guard over myself. Total abandonment to the will of God. Complete forgetfulness of the world and of created things. Sobriety and mortification. Interior recollection in the circumstances and during the occupations most calculated to dissipate my mind. Modesty in my exterior and bearing. Faithfulness, gentleness, cordiality, charity towards my brethren. Tender devotion to the Ever-Blessed Virgin and to the saints my patrons. Fervent and generous love for our Lord on the Cross and in the Most Blessed Sacrament. To propose to myself God and His glory as the sole end of all my actions, and to strive after that object with all my strength, in order that I may be confirmed in Him."

The virtues he particularly aims at acquiring are, first, humility, as the ground-work of his perfection; then, penance; the spirit of prayer and meditation; the spirit of faith; and the continual presence of God. The faults to be avoided are, inconstancy in conduct; a facility in allowing oneself to be carried away by that eagerness which sometimes takes possession of the soul and impels it to an act, good in itself, but out of

season; self-love, and its subtle manœuvres; and that sort of sloth and negligence, that want of order and method, which hinders advance in both piety and knowledge.

Mgr. de Cosnac, the Archbishop of Sens, who had been installed in his Metropolitan See the previous year, and who conferred all the sacerdotal orders in succession on young Muard, held him in the very highest esteem, of which he gave him such marked proofs that, later on, P. Muard was heard to observe, with that simplicity and humility which was habitual to him, "I do not know why his Grandeur had this esteem for me; there were so many others more worthy than myself". In the August and September of the year 1832 this prelate was administering Confirmation in all the chief places throughout his large diocese; the neighbouring parishes being invited to attend and bring their candidates for the reception of that sacrament. Vireaux had still no pastor of its own, being served, as heretofore, by the Curé of Pacy-sur-Armençon, M. Rolley. He begged his former pupil, though as yet only in minor orders, to charge himself with the preparation of all in that village who had not been confirmed, giving them such instructions on the principal truths of the faith as might be needed. Jean-Baptiste was beloved and honoured in his native place, and the young people of his own age, and even those who were older than himself, came readily to hearken to his instructions and to receive his advice in order to qualify themselves, not for Confirmation alone, but for those other two sacraments which generally precede its administration, Penance and the Eucharist, for some of them had never as yet been partakers of either.

The existence of this feeling among his fellow-

villagers, with whom he had passed his boyhood, is certainly remarkable. Familiarity, it is said, breeds contempt; possibly, in part, because no one can stand too close an examination, and this would be specially the case where the careless days of youth had been spent together; but Jean-Baptiste's days had never been careless, and we are constantly struck with the singular respect—we might almost say veneration—which from his earliest years he inspired, more or less, in all who were brought into near contact with him. He readily performed the office which his Curé committed to him, being, indeed, very glad of this opportunity to exercise his zeal and to make an essay in the pastoral functions on which he was soon to enter; and he acquitted himself so well that the comparatively numerous and well-instructed Vireaux contingent received the Archbishop's special commendation. There was another mark of zeal which is one of the obligations imposed on a young cleric when he is admitted to minor orders, that of looking to the decorum and beauty of God's house, a duty which he discharged with great activity and fervour. "The praise," says the Abbé Brullée, "which St. Jerome bestows on his beloved Nepotianus, might have been awarded to our young Levite during the whole time that he had the care of the sacristy of the seminary and during his vacations. Full of the thought that there was nothing little in the service of God, he was most diligent in seeing that the pavement of the church was swept, the altars adorned, the sanctuary kept fresh and bright." But, do what he might, he was not able, unassisted, to repair the wretched dilapidation into which the poor church of Vireaux had fallen; the few sacerdotal vestments it possessed were nearly worn out, there was

scarcely any altar-linen, and the sacred vessels were in a very bad condition. Jean-Baptiste groaned over this state of things, but he did not limit himself to lamentations; he made himself a beggar for God's sanctuary, soliciting help from his fellow-seminarists and from all those persons of whose good will in such matters he felt assured. From Mgr. de Cosnac he obtained an alb and some ornaments for the altar, and succeeded in so ordering things that the Holy Mysteries could, at any rate, be celebrated once more with decency in this long-neglected church.

During the whole period which preceded his reception of the diaconate and his subsequent elevation to the priesthood, his mind was fully occupied with the necessity which he judged to be incumbent on him of leading a more perfect life than he had hitherto done. We learn this from his notes and, in particular, from some resolutions to that effect recorded in October, 1833, with this solemn heading: "In the Name of the Most Holy and Most Adorable Trinity, in presence of the Ever-Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, of St. John the Baptist, of St. Francis Regis, and of the whole heavenly court, I, Marie-François-Jean-Baptiste Muard, sub-deacon, at the close of a retreat, and after having had the happiness to receive my Adorable Saviour, make the following resolutions". The resolutions themselves regard almost entirely the same points, and are, in fact, substantially the same in character as those which he drew up when preparing for the sub-diaconate. They embody one and the same idea, viz., the special sanctity to which he is called. He has never had any other; only it develops itself and grows in intensity every day, and more than ever as the solemn moment draws nigh when he is to ascend the last and highest steps of the sanctuary. But often,

in that deep humility which he had been labouring so earnestly to acquire during all the years of his young life, he felt himself oppressed with a sense of his own unworthiness for undertaking so sublime an office. After dwelling on all its lofty prerogatives and obligations, which, he says, would make it a formidable burden for the very angels themselves, "I think," he adds, "that it might be better for me to bury myself in some desert, there to weep over my sins and sanctify myself". But immediately we meet with the invariable reaction; the divine passion for conquest, as we may call it, the conquest of souls, is once more in the ascendant, the happiness of sacrificing himself for his brethren and consuming himself for the glory of God regains the mastery of him, and he remembers that he can do all things through Him who strengthens him and also girds him for the battle. What matter his weakness and his incapacity? "The foolish things of the world hath God chosen, that He may confound the wise, and the weak things of the world hath God chosen, that he may confound the strong; and the base things of the world, and the things that are contemptible, hath God chosen, and things that are not, that He might bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in His sight:"* in these words and in their application to himself he found his consolation. "*Gratia Dei mecum*,"—here was his strength; but then he must generously correspond with that grace.

Perhaps no one ever dreaded his own inconstancy more than did this holy youth, who appears in our eyes a very model of stability. He thought that he had never really given his heart to the God who had ever been so lovingly asking him for it, and this

* 1 Cor. i. 27-29.

because he had never extirpated self-love and self-will. "In vain," he says, "may I form the best resolutions, in vain may I make some efforts to keep them; I shall never arrive at the perfection which God requires of me if I do not apply myself specially and uninterruptedly to live in self-abnegation, and, above all, to destroy my self-love; it is an enemy with which I must have neither peace nor truce, because it is continually seeking my ruin. This wretched self-love is a tree so firmly rooted in my heart that all my endeavours have heretofore been limited to lopping, as it were, the branches. Now that I am about to be raised to the dignity of deacon I must attack this tree at its root and cut into the very quick. This calls for energy and courage, and I am very weak and pusillanimous; but I reckon upon Thee, O my God, and Thy all powerful grace; so that, if my weakness discourages me, Thy grace reassures me." Now, the only way, he considered, to destroy this enemy was by the continual practice of self-renunciation. "Abnegation in prayer and in spiritual exercises, neither seeking nor desiring too ardently sensible consolations; abnegation in study; abnegation at meals; abnegation at recreation-time; abnegation in conversation; abnegation in every thing and everywhere": such were his resolutions. Sensible devotion was no certain proof, he knew, of a true love of God. There was a much surer test. "Do you wish to know if you love God?" he says. "Examine yourself as to whether you love mortification. The love of God, which is nourished by sacrifices, cannot subsist without mortifications. Where there is no mortification there is no love of God. And you will recognise progress in divine love by a greater disposition to deny self: it is almost an infallible sign."

Jean-Baptiste certainly possessed this token; for, not contented with the ordinary privations which he imposed upon himself at his meals, where he was ingenious in discovering secret methods of mortifying his taste and depriving himself at times even of what was strictly necessary, he also applied himself to crucify his flesh by the use of all sorts of instruments of penance. We have seen how early in life he became in a measure familiar with these. Hence we may imagine how unsparing to himself he had now become.

The love of corporal austerities, however, he would doubtless have considered as in itself no valid proof of progress in true charity. Mortification he understood in its most comprehensive sense; and bodily penance was with him only a step to the attainment of that interior spirit of penance which is inseparable from the love of God, or, at the most, it was a very feeble expression of it. "O my God," he exclaims, "to love Thee, to serve Thee, shall henceforth form my whole happiness; I will have no other pleasure save in weeping over my past faults. Give me, then, my Saviour, if it please Thee, those delicious tears of penitence; I value them above all the treasures of the world; give me also, my most amiable Jesus, holy humility, which shall convince me that I am the most abject of men, and the most abominable of sinners, as in truth I am; and, above all, give me Thy love; let me burn, let me consume, let me die, for the love of a God who loves me, who has loved me so much. Thou lovest me, O my God, and shall I not love Thee? Thou diedst for the love of me; and shall I not die for the love of Thee? Oh! from this very day let us die to the world and to self by penance, in order to live for ever in God and for God."

How much we should have lost, if this servant of God had not been moved to relieve the overflowings of his heart by committing them often to paper! We should have been left in comparative ignorance of the exceeding beauty of his soul, and of the secret springs of his exterior holiness. For holy undoubtedly he was in his conduct, giving offence in no point, but edification in all; and this, of course, told powerfully on his surroundings, and particularly on those who had most frequent access to him. Hence the esteem, respect, and almost veneration, with which, as we have more than once said, he was constantly regarded, particularly in the seminary, where his virtues could not be hidden. Still much remained concealed, for no one more sedulously shunned singularity than he did, and a large number of his acts of self-abnegation, consisting in the interior sacrifice of his personal will and inclinations, he was able, from their very nature, to shroud from view, though his habitual self-denial could not escape notice. Thus it was that, when questioned afterwards as to their reminiscences of him at this period, his surviving fellow-seminarists had comparatively little in detail to recall concerning their holy companion. All, however, gave the same strong testimony to his charity, goodness, sweetness, evenness of temper, and piety. All spoke of him as a most exemplary seminarist, even when they had failed to notice in him at the time anything extraordinary. Such is the nature, for instance, of the evidence given, at the distance of fifty years, by one who was associated with him as master of studies during the latter part of their stay at the seminary. He adds that constant visits to the Blessed Sacrament, frequent communions, and numerous ejaculatory prayers nourished and increased his piety, but with regard to

his corporal penances he could not speak with any personal knowledge. All he had observed was his fidelity in keeping the rules of fasting, and in practising those additional mortifications and privations with regard to food and the use of fire which, indeed, are customary occasionally with good seminarists. It would be just these things that would be kept out of sight, so far as possible ; and every eye is not equally penetrating. His companion, however, seems to have detected his spirit of poverty in his neglect of his shoes. "I believe," he says, "that it was not from carelessness, but from his contempt for all that was not poor and humble." Nevertheless, he used to plague him about it, and, when he sat near him during the conferences, would pass his feet over those of his neighbour in order to soil them still more, and so compel him, from very shame, to clean them. Young Muard took it in all good humour, but his friend is compelled to acknowledge that he rarely succeeded in his object. He also specified the zeal for the conversion of sinners and of the heathen which used to manifest itself in conversation whenever the subject was introduced.

But we prefer to quote from another witness, who speaks more fully on this and other subjects. The recollections of this seminarist, like those of the last, were given upon request in the year 1882. "The fellow-disciples of P. Muard who had the happiness of near access to him were filled with veneration for him. His conversation during recreation time was a veritable apostolate. It was impossible to hear him speak of the goodness of God towards His children and of His mercy towards sinners without being truly moved to participate in his love for God and in his feelings of gratitude for the benefits He bestows. How many edifying things

might be said of his spirit of faith, his confidence in God, his humility, his gentleness, his patience, his zeal for the salvation of souls! Too happy would he have been to shed his blood to the very last drop for the salvation of one single soul, ransomed at the price of the Blood of a God! What a grand and reverential attachment was his to the Church, and to the Sovereign Pontiff! His filial respect for superiors, his esteem and affection for his fellow-students, his winning behaviour, were known to everyone; his complete self-abandonment into the hands of Providence, his perfect submission to the will of God, his abnegation of self at every moment were visible to all. Prayer, devotion to the Holy Eucharist, to the Adorable Heart of Jesus, the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and to the saints and blessed angels were his delight. Mortifications, fasts, and divers penitential exercises for the conversion of sinners and the deliverance of the souls in Purgatory held a special place among the meritorious acts of the week. His reverential attitude and look of profound adoration in chapel, where Jesus was present in His tabernacle, showed that he was all-absorbed in God and occupied solely with the things of God. Independently of the community exercises, at which he was very assiduous, he found time also for those little practices which he imposed upon himself according as he felt interiorly moved by God."

The witness from whom we have quoted, being his senior, was only two years with him at the seminary; nevertheless he knew him well enough to be able, as we have seen, to testify much good of him. At his studies he notes that he was both intelligent and laborious, and, when following his course of theology, there was no difficulty which he did not speedily over-

come by his steady perseverance. His great desire, he adds, was to be well imbued with this science, which has God for its object, that he might learn to know and love Him better and serve Him with an unswerving fidelity; he was anxious also to complete his course as soon as possible, that, being invested with the sacerdotal character, he might labour henceforth for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. This may suffice as the record of those who were in daily contact with him, in regard to young Muard's conduct at the Grand Séminaire of Sens. While some had more closely observed him than others, or had enjoyed better opportunities of doing so, the testimony of all was similar in kind, and it is specially noteworthy that not a fault, not a blemish, is mentioned. This reminds us of the praise which Holy Church gives to those Confessors who have been raised to her altars, quoting the words of the Son of Sirach in the Epistle selected for their feasts : *Beatus vir qui inventus est sine macula . . . qui potuit transgredi, et non est transgressus.** This is the highest eulogium that could be bestowed, albeit negative in its character, for it implies perfection, which cannot be inferred even from the noblest act of virtue.

Jean-Baptiste received the diaconate on the 21st of December, 1833, and on the 24th of May, 1834, he was ordained priest. A slight incident illustrative of his humility on that occasion has been recorded. One of his friends who attended on him during a serious illness had been charmed by the sweet resignation which he displayed, and had become particularly

* "Blessed is the man that is found without blemish . . . who could have transgressed, and hath not transgressed."—Eccles. xxxi. 8-10.

attached to him. Having succeeded him in his office of sacristan, he had, whether as a mark of his friendship or as an honour due to his merits, selected for him on the day of his ordination the richest vestment at his disposal. All in vain : the humble deacon perceived what was intended, and contrived to pass it on to his neighbour, so great was his repugnance to anything that might savour of pomp or display; "and indeed," says the Abbé Brullée, who relates this little occurrence, "he had need of no other adornment on that day than his modesty, his goodness, and that beautiful expression of candour and tranquillity which so distinguished him among all, that his superior, as we are told, could not refrain from saying, 'Look at that young priest; I believe that he has this morning carried his baptismal innocence to the altar'; and he was not the only one who thought so".

We have no record or memorial of his own sentiments and thoughts during the sublime ceremony of ordination, for they were probably too deep for expression. All we have is a short note containing a summary of the priestly virtues, the result, no doubt, of reflections long familiar to him, but which he was now bound to reduce to practice. To love God with all the powers of his soul, and increase every day in that holy love; to persevere courageously in all that he has undertaken during the retreat; to meditate every day on the mysteries of our Lord; to recite his Breviary with the utmost fervour; to offer the Holy Sacrifice with the ardour of a seraph; to practise daily some mortifications, even corporal; to perform all his actions in a perfect order; not to waste a single instant; to have an ardent zeal for the glory of God and for the salvation of souls; to be full of humility, gentleness,

prudence, and modesty: such ought the priest to be; and such, we may add with truth, was Jean-Baptiste Muard. He was not only registering his purposes, but unconsciously drawing the portrait of his future self.

CHAPTER V.

Parish-priest of Joux-la-Ville.

After passing a few days with his family, as was customary with newly-ordained priests, M. Muard joined his former master, the Abbé Rolley, glad to commence his first pastoral exercises under the eye of his old director, for whom he had always preserved the most grateful affection. Here he led a true missionary life, preaching, praying, catechising, hearing confessions, and preparing children for their first communion. Four weeks, however, rolled by, and the young priest received no appointment. All those who had been ordained along with him had already received their nominations, some as curés, others as vicaires, and had been provided with their faculties, nay, had already been installed in their respective parishes and functions. He alone was passed over. To one who had made an absolute surrender of himself into the hands of God this could be no cause for uneasiness or disappointment, but, as he thought that possibly letters intended for him might have miscarried by the post, he deemed it advisable to communicate with the head of the Grand Séminaire of Sens, the Abbé Pétitier, upon the subject. He took care to tell him, however, that he was not writing to claim an appointment, but only to apprize him that, if any faculties had been sent to him, they had never reached him, and, if such were the case, to

request that fresh ones might be forwarded. The Abbé Pétitier replied, "My dear friend, your faculties have not gone astray, seeing that they have never been sent to you. You were completely forgotten when the posts were assigned, but you may be quite easy, for we are going to repair this neglect by appointing you Curé of Joux-la-Ville, an important parish. In a religious point of view the parish is good. It is true that lately difficulties have arisen between the Curé and his parishioners, and these have grown into serious dissensions, which might have been avoided. We love to think that by your united prudence and kindness, and with God's providential aid, you will easily triumph over all this, and will soon have re-established peace and order in the parish."

There seems to have been question of a door which the Abbé André had caused to be opened to facilitate his access from the presbytery to the church through his garden, but, in all probability, this matter was not the "head and front" of the offence given, but rather the latest subject of annoyance, which filled up the measure of parochial discontent. Be this as it may, Joux-la-Ville was in a very unquiet and disaffected state, and had the reputation of being a most undesirable post for any priest, young or old. One thing is plain, for M. Muard himself said it to a friend, that but for the circumstance of his having been overlooked when the newly-ordained received their appointments, he would never have been sent to Joux-la-Ville, and that God had His own views and designs in having thus permitted the diocesan administration to forget him. We have good reason to think so too. High as was the opinion entertained of M. Muard's holiness and prudence,—and high indeed it must have been for him

to be appointed to such a post even after other vacancies had been filled,—his youth and practical inexperience in the pastoral office would seem to have rendered it undesirable to place him, at the very outset, in so difficult and responsible a situation. For Joux-la-Ville was, not only a disturbed parish, but a large and scattered parish, having several hamlets included in it, some at four or five miles from the church. This circumstance made it anyhow a heavy charge for a single priest, particularly in cases of illness. But one was being sent thither who did not recoil from work.

M. Muard received his appointment on the 18th of June, and lost no time in proceeding, accompanied by the Abbé Rolley, to the scene of his future labours. He was extremely well received. The fame of the virtues of their new Curé had preceded him, and well-nigh the whole parish was assembled to catch a first sight of him as he came down the hill facing the church and presbytery. There must have been a strong prepossession in his favour, for an oracular old man was heard to ejaculate, "I know, from the sound of the bells, that it is a saint who is arriving". However high the expectations which might have been raised, the new-comer was not likely to disappoint his flock. They no sooner saw him than they felt sure that an angel of peace had come to them. His air of humility and modesty, his benignant countenance and winning manner in accosting them, speedily won the hearts of the good people of Joux-la-Ville; and the future was abundantly to prove the justice of these first impressions. Here is his own brief account of his arrival. "I was very well received by the inhabitants, who seemed happy to have a curé. I addressed them very simply. I said that I had been far from expecting to

be chosen as their curé, but since Divine Providence had sent me amongst them I would do all that depended upon me to be useful to them; that I knew well that their parish deserved to have a worthier pastor than myself, but that I could, at any rate, promise to spend myself entirely in their service." Peace and tranquillity, as it may be supposed, were under such favourable auspices easily restored, and we hear no more of the objectionable door, or of any other grievance, real or supposed. It was not long before the inhabitants of Joux-la-Ville became aware of the happy acquisition they had made in the person of their new pastor. There was but one exception to this general appreciation of his merits, and that was in the case of a doctor, whose family occupied an influential position in the place, and who, for some reason or other, never regarded M. Muard with a friendly eye. The latter, who was quite aware of the existence of this feeling, took not the smallest notice of it; and, when brought into any necessary relations with him, which he never strove to avoid, behaved as he might to any other person.

We subjoin a few extracts from a letter of his, dated July 29th, to one of his seminarist friends. After excusing himself for not having written sooner, he says, "Let us talk now of my parish and, above all, of my church. My parish, of which I had heard an alarming report, is far from being as bad as was represented. I must own there are persons, and a good number, too, who are without religion, but where in the present day will you not find individuals of that sort? In compensation I have some pious, some very pious, souls, who approach the sacraments frequently; and I remark in the people generally a foundation of faith which only needs rousing. On all Sundays, and often

in the course of the week, I am called to the confessional; so you see I meet with some roses among my thorns. Every one seems much attached to me. Lately a report was circulated which was near putting the whole place in a ferment. I was said to be appointed vicaire at Auxerre; immediately there was talk of getting up petitions; it was openly declared that I should not be allowed to leave; so I cannot say how things would have passed off if I had received orders to go. But happily it was no such thing." He then mentions another proof of the affection of his flock. A fortnight after his arrival they collected the *gerbe* (sheaf of corn) for him. This was a voluntary offering which it was customary for the faithful to present to their pastor, chiefly in parishes where the Passion was read at certain seasons of the year for the preservation of the fruits of the earth. Some of his parishioners who had been in the habit of withholding this gift presented him with two sheaves. He then proceeds, "My parish is only seven leagues (21 miles) in extent; you see it does not ill resemble the Missions of the New World": the treasured desire of his heart is continually cropping up. "I was always fond of walking, so it suits me well. I have as many as nine hamlets of different sizes; my parish numbers in all three hundred and thirty hearths, which is equivalent to about 1300 souls: a third of the population inhabit the hamlets, the rest live in the town. I am soon going to begin Catechism, and shall have near upon 120 children, 90 of whom are to be prepared for first communion. See if I have not enough to occupy me." The presbytery, which had a good garden attached to it, he dismisses with a few words of commendation, and ends his letter by describing enthusiastically the beauty of the church of Joux-la-Ville,

Such was the theatre upon which his indefatigable zeal was beginning its operations. His first step was to pay his pastoral visit to the whole parish, and it was done with so much simplicity and kindliness as to gain the hearts of every one, rich as well as poor. The one impression which all received from this first personal introduction to their spiritual father, was that he was full of sweetness for others and abnegation of self. Nothing, perhaps, moves to a sincerer admiration. He could be firm, however, as we shall see by and by. The children and the schools received his earliest attention. The training of the rising generation in the knowledge and practice of their religion is always one of the chief solicitudes of a good pastor, and one of the most effectual means of the regeneration of a parish, but at that juncture it was a matter of all the more pressing importance as secularization in education had become the order of the day in high quarters, and there seemed to be an almost universal conspiracy to withdraw the lay teachers from the Curé's proper influence. M. Muard was able to preserve his salutary authority in Joux-la-Ville, and he was fortunate in having a well-disposed schoolmaster on whom he could reckon for co-operation.

He considered it most essential, if religion was to obtain any firm hold of the young mind, to draw children to the sacrament of penance as soon as their reason was sufficiently developed, and not to wait, as was so often done, until the time of their first communion. The result of such a custom, combined with the want of any effectual supervision after the accomplishment of this great act, is to isolate it, and convert the short period of instruction and preparation which precede it into a sort of pious interlude, soon well-nigh forgotten,

or at least practically inoperative on the future life ; the first communion being thus, in too many cases, not the first alone, but the last. After the most diligent and careful preparation of the children, when the great day approached he would invite some of his brethren to attend, and use every means to invest the solemnity with special pomp and splendour, so as to produce an enduring impression, not only on the recipients but on the entire parish. He used to keep a specially watchful eye on the young communicants until they were established in some employment, knowing that this interval is often a time full of perils to youth. On Sundays he collected the girls together, confiding them to the care of some virtuous and pious member of the Confraternity of the Blessed Virgin; the boys he assembled at the presbytery. There was no difficulty in attracting them, for he had known how to make the hours of Catechism interesting to his little flock, and had engaged their affection by his paternal manner. From amongst these young people he would now select such as seemed most apt for study, and who manifested some disposition for the ecclesiastical state, having it in his heart to do for others what had been charitably done for himself; and, in fact, during the four years that he was pastor of Joux-la-Ville, he had the consolation of providing the Church with several priests.

Confraternities he considered as a great instrument for spiritual good, but they need the encouragement of the pastor, which infuses life into everything. A Confraternity of Our Lady already existed in the place, and we need hardly say with what zeal he applied himself to extend it and to promote fervent devotion among its members to her whom he so loved to call his mother. He also united to it that of the Scapular. There was

besides another confraternity existing in Joux-la-Ville, that of St. Eloi (Eligius), and the associates of the two sodalities had been in the habit on certain feast-days of going in procession round the church. An abuse had, however, introduced itself in connection with this public act of devotion which the new pastor was determined to put down; and, mild and gentle as he was, we see him on this occasion behaving with a decision which, as exemplifying his character, makes the circumstance well worth recording. Each confraternity had its staff or banner. That of St. Eloi was borne by a young man, that of Our Lady by a young girl. Now these two had been in the habit of marching together in front of the processions inside as well as outside of the church. Moreover, their behaviour was neither reverential nor decorous. The couple exchanged glances, smirked and laughed, and sometimes even nudged each other with their elbows, as if they were engaged in some amusing frolic. M. Muard was resolved to put a stop to this scandal, and, after pondering the matter in his own mind, he bethought himself of a plan which would remove the opportunity for its recurrence.

There had been heretofore in the parish a Confraternity of St. Vincent, Martyr, to which the vine-dressers of the outlying hamlets had chiefly belonged, but which seems to have died out. This pious association he proposed to revive, and with this view spoke to some of the best disposed among that class of labourers, and found them well pleased with the idea. Accordingly, he announced from the pulpit on the following Sunday that he was ready to enrol any who would give in their names before the feast of St. Vincent. The reader may wonder what all this had to say to the removal of the above-mentioned scandal, but it

had much to say to it. The Confraternity of St. Vincent must necessarily have its banner. A little subscription was easily raised to provide one, and the individual chosen who was to carry it. On the Sunday preceding the feast of the Saint he thanked from the pulpit the men of good will who had given their names for enrolment and all who had contributed towards the purchase of the banner. He then proceeded to tell them that, of course, it was to be carried on the coming festival. "Yes, my brethren," he said, "it will be borne in procession, and he who is first to have that honour has already been selected by his associates. But, you will tell me, we have already two banners, and those who carry them will no longer be able to march in front, as the aisles of the church are not wide enough to allow of it. My reply is easy: we will do here what is done in all churches. Those who bear the staves, or banners, march one after the other. We shall do the same here. The banner of the Blessed Virgin will go first, then that of St. Eloi, and St. Vincent's will follow. From Sunday next this order will be commenced in the processions."

This pious stratagem of the good pastor failed of accomplishing its object. It was strange, as he himself observed, but some of the very persons who had cried out at the scandal caused by the behaviour of these young people now openly complained, and incited others to express their dissatisfaction: why, they said, not leave things as they were, since the custom had so long existed? Emboldened by these speeches, and by the persuasion that they had the support of public opinion, the youth and his companion agreed to ignore their pastor's orders, and marched side by side, as usual, leaving St. Vincent's banner-bearer to find a place

where he could. But they did not know with whom they had to deal. After the Gospel M. Muard ascended the pulpit. That he was extremely displeased, who could doubt? and how could he be otherwise at this open defiance of his authority? but he was perfectly master of himself. He had too long exercised the most rigid self-control to be ever dominated by passion or disturbed by irritation; he was, therefore, perfectly calm, but this only added force to the few determined words which he addressed to the congregation. "You have seen," he said, "what has taken place in the procession. No account has been made of my observations; permit me, then, to tell you that, if next Sunday my directions are not attended to, I shall immediately write to Mgr. de Sens and beg him to remove me, grounding my request on the act of insubordination which has just taken place. If this act should be repeated next Sunday, it will be a clear proof that you have no respect for your Curé; in which case I am useless among you." The parishioners must have seen that he was in earnest, and knew that he was a man to keep his word; the young couple were accordingly advised not to oppose him any longer, but comply with his injunctions. This was done, and on the following Sunday the order which their pastor had prescribed was observed.

It was a very prominent desire of the Curé of Joux-la-Ville to gain a hold on the men, and lead them to the serious and open practice of their religion. The encouragement of confraternities was one of his instruments for effecting that end. Until impression has been made upon the bulk of the men, no parish or congregation can be reckoned as won to God; but not only so, it does not as yet offer a sure prospect of steady

progress; and this is not said in any disparagement of the devout female sex, who have so often been the means of preserving faith and keeping piety alive where they would otherwise have wholly died out, and whose adoring love is, assuredly, now as precious in the sight of their glorified Redeemer as when He deigned to accept their ministry while in His suffering state on earth. Still, it is true that religion is never solidly established in a parish or congregation while women, if they do not almost exclusively fill the church, are, at least, well-nigh the only habitual frequenters of the tribunal of penance and constitute far more than a proportionate majority of those who kneel at the altar-rails to receive the Bread of Life. This was the opinion of the great St. Vincent de Paul, who, certainly, did not undervalue the influence of women in promoting the interests of religion. He knew that, "if the Christian woman is the centre, the heart, of the family, the man is its head and its strength; that, consequently, to foster the piety of women is most desirable, but to obtain solid and durable results the men must equally be urged on in the ways of virtue and of the Christian life; if not, the faith of the populations languishes and tends to utter destruction".*

Accordingly, M. Muard used to adopt every means in his power to attract the men; he loved to converse with them, and encouraged them to open their minds and freely express their opinions to him, even when grossly erroneous, for he knew well how to distinguish between the wilful and malicious adversaries of the faith and those who had been led astray by the sophisms of others, or had been brought up, as was

* *Saint Vincent de Paul et Sa Mission Sociale*, par Arthur Loth. Pp. 421, 422.

the case with so many, in ignorance and indifference regarding the truths of our holy religion. With such as these he would hold discussions in a spirit of unwearied patience. He always heard them out, no small trial when your interlocutor is arguing on entirely false premises, and often giving utterance to the most arrant nonsense. When the speaker had delivered himself of all his objections—and it is seldom that any one can get a quiet hearing until his opponent has had his full say—he would take up his arguments one by one, and gently but forcibly demolish them. When he did not succeed in convincing at once, he laid the foundation for future conviction by the favourable impression which he was sure to produce. Moreover, we are so constituted as to be quite as often won through the heart as through the head; we might even say more often. The incurable nonsense-talkers, in particular, who, for all their illogical reasoning, may be no fools, but who have accepted their antichristian notions secondhand, can often justly appreciate the good and the true when witnessed in action. The heart with them reasons better than the head—as perhaps is the case with most of us.

He would sometimes go and spend a winter evening with one of his neighbours. This was by no means with a view to his own recreation, a thing he never looked for, save in so far as it was ever his delight to do his Heavenly Father's will and labour for the salvation of souls. The house which he frequented was a sort of rendezvous for a good many men of the place. Every matter was talked over, but chiefly religious topics were discussed, and this gave M. Muard the opportunity of correcting misapprehensions, removing prejudices and wrong impressions, soothing irritations, and introducing light into not a few minds. When it

did nothing more, it served to make those with whom he conversed know and love the character of the true priest of God, so eminently exemplified in his person. He wished, indeed, to be popular with the men of Joux-la-Ville, but he sought popularity from the highest and purest motive, nay, we do not fear to say, from that motive exclusively. The great majority of men, particularly those who belong to the inferior classes, are much touched by finding themselves the peculiar objects of their pastor's regard and care. The Abbé Brulleé, speaking of the working and artisan class in his own country, says that, although they may appear externally to be hard and insensible, no people have more impressible hearts, and a great number of them have a depth of feeling which would amaze you. Doubtless his observation would be more or less applicable to other populations besides that of France.

"I remember," said one of M. Muard's pupils, "that, having on one occasion addressed a few words to his dear parishioners of Joux, he announced to them that at the evening service he would preach to them. 'It is,' he said, 'the men particularly whom I shall address, those men of Joux whom I love so much. It is they whom I specially invite, and whom I wish to see this evening. Tell them all, my brethren, not to fail to come, for I must positively have a little talk with them, and express to them how dear they are to me, and how deeply they are lodged in my heart.'" That evening the church was crowded.

His charity peculiarly shone forth in his treatment of the sick. He did not wait until they were in danger of death, but often, both from the pulpit and when the opportunity occurred in conversation, expressed his earnest wish to be apprized immediately of the illness

of any of his flock. No matter what the hour of day or night, he was ready to fly to their assistance. The moment he heard that any one was kept at home by indisposition he would lose no time in going to see him, and would in the first place enquire anxiously concerning the bodily ailments of the sufferer, allowing him to be as prolix as he pleased in describing his malady, its origin and progress, all the while evincing the liveliest compassion and sympathy. Before parting, he would say a few edifying words full of that unction and persuasiveness which always accompanied them, and which were now listened to with gratitude by the sick man. Thus was the way opened, should the case become more serious, for approaching the subject of the sacraments; and thus, too, were many previously little disposed induced to make a due preparation for death. To minister to the sick M. Muard would leave everything. If he were at table, he rose at once. To quote an instance: on one occasion, it being observed to him that to all appearance the sick person was in no immediate danger, and that he might without scruple finish his meal, he replied that, if one soul should depart without the succours of religion through his fault, it would be a subject of life-long remorse to him; adding that you must always seize the moment of grace, and remember that it was an eternity that was at stake. One Sunday, just as the principal Mass was finished, it being then past midday, word was brought him that a sick person in a hamlet three miles distant had asked to see him. He set off at once without leaving himself time to take any refreshment, making his act of thanksgiving on the way, and did not return to break his fast until about three o'clock in the afternoon. But with him it was no strange or

exceptional thing to make such exertions; they found their place as matters of course in the rule he had laid down to himself when he became a priest.

He was a true father to the poor, stripping himself in their favour even of what was of strict necessity—money, clothing, his very shoes, which he was known to take off and exchange with a poor man, if he chanced to meet one worse provided in this respect than himself. The poor were in his estimation the nobles in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, since He who is Lord of all had elected to be poor. Hence his strong predilection for them, and his desire to assimilate himself by the voluntary practice of poverty to a state which religion elevates to the sublimity of a virtue. He seems to have been conscious that his liberality was prone to run into excess, or, at any rate, to lack the curb of reasonable caution; of which we have a proof in his having felt himself obliged, in order not to be guilty of tempting Providence, to make this singular resolution, which he committed to paper: "I will be on my guard against my over-facility to do people a service". He often made the poor eat at his table; by which we do not mean merely that he furnished them with a meal under his own roof, but he asked them to dinner as any one might invite friends of his own class. There were two old men in particular—he had a special love for the aged poor—who habitually enjoyed this privilege; and, if they were not punctual to the hour, he would politely wait dinner for them, as he might have done for the first notabilities of the place. Often may these two guests of his have been seen sharing their pastor's dinner at his round table, sitting close beside him, as if they were crowded for room, and he, with that charming simplicity which is seen in its perfection

only in saints, letting them do as they pleased rather than request them to allow him a little more space. He seemed to take a sweet satisfaction in conversing with them, interesting himself in all they had to say, and taking every occasion to turn their hearts to God. A young girl of Joux-la-Ville, who was afterwards a religious at Asinères, remembered seeing these two strange guests of the Curé. "In my youth," she said, "I recollect having seen P. Muard receive frequently at his table two dirty old men to whom he was prodigal of his kindness."

But he made himself all things to all men, and, if he showed this delicate courtesy to persons of low degree, in his manners to those of higher rank and to people of the world there was an exquisite Christian politeness which was not wanting in a certain dignity. "He fulfilled the social duties—to use the Abbé Brullée's words—with an ease and a good grace, seasoned with an indescribable something, both cordial and edifying, which always left a salutary impression on souls." His whole conduct was grounded on the principles of faith, and was guided by supernatural motives; hence, knowing that God has established the powers of this world for the maintenance of good order and justice, he gave honour to whom honour was due. The Mayor of Joux-la-Ville, a respectable old man, but indifferent to religion, like so many others, was completely won by the respect shown to him by M. Muard in view of the position he occupied. Its first result was a display of marked consideration on the part of the magistrate for the young priest, who later on had the happiness of bringing about his conversion, to the great edification of the whole parish.

He maintained the most cordial relations with the

priests in the vicinity, always treating them with great respect and speaking favourably of them; and if any one censured them in his presence, he was sure quietly to defend or excuse them. It had been matter of some internal debate with him how to reconcile two important objects. He thought it very desirable that priests and pastors of souls should hold communication together, and not isolate themselves each in his own little sphere. On the other hand, he had seen dissatisfaction and disedification ensue from too frequent and large assemblings at presbyteries, although they might consist exclusively of priests. To solve this difficulty, he devised the plan of giving these meetings something of the character of ecclesiastical conferences, thus taking away from them the appearance of being mere social gatherings and rendering them also of much practical utility. The priest at whose house the meeting took place was to read to his brethren a paper on some subject of common interest, submitting it subsequently to their kindly criticism. After this he was to provide them with a simple and modest repast. This arrangement proved highly satisfactory. There was no longer any temptation to look upon these meetings as a waste of time and needless expenditure; on the contrary, the people were edified at seeing their pastors working for the general good in a spirit of such fraternal union, while at the same time an object of much importance was promoted in the occasion they afforded for improvement in preaching.

Indeed, as respected himself, he had this object constantly before him; first, with the view of benefiting the flock committed to his charge, but also with an eye to the future missions of which he never lost sight. "As soon as he had a moment's leisure," says the

Abbé Brullée, "while travelling, and even during the night, he would be occupied in searching for powerful reasons, striking images, deep and moving sentiments, familiar illustrations,—in short, everything calculated to make an impression on the minds and hearts of the people, for he never laboured for any other audience." One of his pupils relates how he would call him early in the morning, when confined to his bed by illness, to dictate to him a sermon which he had been composing during the silence of the night. He would also give his pupils a list of objections which he had drawn up, begging them to point out to him which of them they had noticed as being the most common among his parishioners, and desiring them to report to him any irreligious or antichristian observations which they might have chanced to hear. From the pulpit he would also conjure his people to let him know the reasons which had weight with any of them in keeping them estranged from the faith and from the duties which it prescribes, promising to reply to them with the utmost patience and good-will. These appeals had been attended more than once with most consolatory results. The last Lent which he preached at Joux-la-Ville made a profound impression, which the lapse of years did not efface. It was quite a little mission. Owing to the scattered nature of the parish, which, as we have seen, embraced a circuit of many miles, there were numbers to whom it was impossible to profit by his daily preaching at the church, especially in the evenings, since, besides the distance, the roads leading from these hamlets lay mostly through thick woods and were in a very bad condition. But this difficulty, which was a reasonable excuse for the non-attendance of the families settled in these outlying districts, was

lightly regarded by the pastor himself. If the sheep could not come to him, he would go to the sheep, rejoicing to be thus serving a sort of apprenticeship for that apostolic life to which he was always looking forward. Regardless of all the labours of the day, he was accustomed, during Advent and Lent, to go and preach in the evening in a room fitted up as a chapel in one of these hamlets. A pupil who accompanied him on these excursions and carried the lantern as they made their way at night through the dark woods, related how one evening, when M. Muard had been talking of his desire to go on the foreign missions, they fell in with a workman, whom the Curé, as was his wont, engaged in conversation. Gradually he introduced the subject of religion, and was struck with horror at finding that the poor man was utterly devoid of faith, and worshipped the sun. When their roads diverged and they had parted company, "See, my friend," exclaimed M. Muard, "we have not far to go to meet with savages: here is a man who has no more religion than they have".

Such distressing incidents often made him inwardly hesitate between diocesan and foreign missions; and then he would renew his promise to God to do His holy will whatever it might be, when He should vouchsafe to make it known to him. While awaiting that manifestation, he never slackened his energies in working for the benefit of his parish, sparing neither time, labour, nor such resources as were at his disposal. And here we must again note his zeal for the decoration of God's house and for everything that could enhance the splendour of His worship. Like David he could say, "I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of Thy house, and the place where Thy glory dwelleth"; and not His glory only, as in the Jewish temple, but He

Himself, who deigns to make the humblest Catholic church His personal abode. This zeal had a second motive, as like to the first as the love of our neighbour is like to the love of God. He knew that the visible majesty of God's house and the splendour of its services had a powerful effect in attracting and moving hearts, so closely are the ideas of beauty, truth, and holiness allied in the minds of men. At festal seasons, therefore, he loved to see the church adorned with wreaths of verdure and garlanded with flowers, and at Solemn Benediction on high days the sanctuary was one blaze of light, owing much to some gigantic lustres which he had fabricated with his own hands, being very skilful in all mechanical work. The ear was no less charmed than the eye, for at the cost of many sacrifices he had trained an excellent choir, and well-trained were his choristers in more senses than one; a praise which cannot be indiscriminately awarded to every church-choir. Before he left Joux-la-Ville he had provided its church with an organ, so that nothing was wanting to make the service of God attractive. The result not only was an increase of fervour in the devotion of the pious faithful, but many persons hitherto indifferent to religion were led to frequent the church and, being happily caught in the snare laid for them, were finally won to God by the persuasive words of the holy preacher.

CHAPTER VI.

An Unexpected Change.

Occasional mention has been made of M. Muard's pupils. He had, in fact, added to his laborious duties

as parish priest the voluntary charge of a certain number of youths whom he prepared for entering the seminary, as he had himself formerly been prepared by the Abbé Rolley. So fully did he appreciate the value of a work of this kind that he would willingly have filled his house with them, but boys of this age require constant supervision, a thing difficult, if not impossible, for one who had so extensive a parish to administer. Indeed it may well be asked how one man could find time to do all that he had undertaken, and, not only to do it, but to do it well, for M. Muard was one who always devoted his whole mind to his immediate work; and it is perhaps impossible to deny that he was sometimes led by his zeal to undertake more than was possible for him to accomplish. Hence the sole fault, if fault it was, of which he was ever accused with any apparent foundation, and with which we find him far more frequently reproaching himself, namely want of punctuality. But we must remember that want of punctuality, which is a serious defect when it proceeds from a careless forgetfulness of engagements, from indolence, or from absence of consideration for others, was with him, when it occurred, referable to causes not merely different, but diametrically opposite. While occupied, as the Abbé Brullée observes, in such various works undertaken for the glory of God, and in frequent runnings after wandering sheep, time would slip by, and M. le Curé would be late for some appointment. Such slight failures were the almost involuntary consequence of his insatiable zeal and of his spirit of self-sacrifice.

We do not know that he had made any similar vow, but his conduct, where not bound by some stringent obligation, reminds us of the practice of the Père de

Condren. "I vow," said that wonderful man, "to be at the disposal of everybody." Thus the first person whom he might meet, were it a mere child, had as much power to detain the great Oratorian as the most distinguished person would have had. He never felt that he had the option of dismissing any, no matter whom, but left it to themselves to take their leave when they pleased. Often, indeed, not only the lowest of the people but the most tiresome and prosy individuals of this class would occupy his time, while persons of quality were impatiently expecting him; and, when reproached with not using his authority to send them away, he would reply that he was not at liberty to do so; that he was the servant of all, and, therefore, all had the right to command him, while he had not the right to refuse any one. We can easily imagine that a resolution of this kind, taken and faithfully carried out, would be above the comprehension of ordinary good people, who would as little believe in its propriety and prudence—human propriety and prudence being all they know much about—as they probably would in the possibility of accepting literally our Lord's words: "Whosoever will force thee one mile, go with him other two".* There are, however, chosen souls whom the Holy Ghost instructs in the higher forms of supernatural wisdom, and teaches, not merely to comply with the spirit of our Lord's counsels, but to fulfil them in their very letter. By many, certainly, not only was P. de Condren's self-abnegation ill understood, but it subjected him at times to animadversions, raillery, and obtrusive advice, more hard to bear than the inconveniences and trials entailed by the vow he

* St. Matthew v. 41.

had made for the love of Him who had offered Himself a victim for all and each of us.*

We have made this digression, because there would seem to be a striking similarity between P. de Condren's spirit of self-sacrifice and that of P. Muard; and also because the reason which more than excuses the inexactness as to time of that holy man may apply substantially to the subject of this narrative. It was well

* The following passage taken from the Abbé Pin's Life of P. Charles de Condren will interest, from its apparent applicability to the sentiments of the saintly man whose biography we are tracing. "What crucified him most in the observance of his vow was the necessity under which it sometimes placed him of failing to keep appointed hours. What must he not, then, have suffered who had engaged to be the humble servant and obedient slave of all the world; how certain lofty spirits must have made him feel all the weight of their wounded pride and disappointed pretensions! He never, however, for all this recalled the resolution he had made. But, as a faithful and submissive servant, who can dispose neither of his time nor of himself, he never made an absolute promise, or engaged himself to anything save on the condition that he should find himself at liberty, and that his *master*—who, in fact, was the first person who could get possession of him—should not detain or otherwise dispose of him. Thus if, at the moment he was setting out, some one wished to keep him in conversation, he would simply inform him of his engagement, but, if the person insisted, would resign himself without uttering a word. P. de Condren, the slave of Jesus Christ and of the members of His mystical body, will be a 'scandal' and a 'folly' like his Lord, but, like Him also, he will be for some 'the wisdom of God'; he will be a miracle of that wisdom, and so much the greater miracle in that it was to last, not for an hour or a day, but for a whole life." It is almost needless to observe that this holy man's condescension would not have extended to cases where he was bound by a superior obligation, as, for instance, in the administration of the sacraments or in the performance of his priestly duties to the sick.

to draw attention to this, since what might otherwise be regarded as proceeding from a moral defect may really have had its source in the practice of an heroic virtue. But he was so beloved by his flock that there was little disposition to criticise or find fault with him. If he was unpunctual, people, instead of complaining, would account for his absence by saying that he must have been detained by some charitable work. But M. Muard knew well that the lamp will not burn without oil, and so, although overdone with work, and all the more because thus overdone, he made time to kneel frequently at the foot of the Tabernacle, there to renew his fervour, and seek grace for poor sinners, perseverance for the just, and the accomplishment of the will of God in himself. There he would often spend whole hours together, engaged in colloquies of love with the Prisoner of love, the King of his heart. Of the sweetness of these colloquies he has left us some faint traces in a dialogue, penned by his own hand, between the faithful soul and Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

He was also frequently observed in prayer before the altar of the Immaculate Mother of God. His parishioners, noting his assiduity and the length of time he remained kneeling before Mary's image, would exclaim, "It is really wonderful how M. le Curé loves the Blessed Virgin!" They were not mistaken; he did, indeed, love her with the most tender and filial affection. Nothing could exceed the trust he reposed in her. She was the confidant of all his troubles, the director of all his undertakings, the dispenser of all the favours and graces which he asked of God, the hope of his vocation, in fine, his good mother, as he delighted in calling her. It was at the foot of the Cross that he

loved particularly to consider her, because it was there she became our mother, when she immolated herself in union with her Son and the sword of sorrow pierced her soul. The priest, he held, was bound to make her his pattern in uniting himself to the atoning sacrifice which the Son of God offered for the salvation of men. He must not be contented with praying, preaching, and performing acts of charity ; he must present himself as a victim of expiation for his parish, if he would see his ministry crowned with success. This is why he fasted so frequently, and wore a girdle of iron, studded with sharp points, several days in the week, and a hair-shirt almost without intermission, night and day.

Besides allotting so considerable a time to actual prayer, he lived in an habitual state of recollection. This recollection became more intense when he was about to perform any of his priestly functions. Never did he take his seat in the tribunal of penance without first invoking the lights and graces of the Holy Spirit; and what his preparation for Mass must have been might be inferred from the effect produced on those who assisted at it, and who felt themselves penetrated with veneration for the holy mysteries which he celebrated with such angelic fervour. Often nothing more was needed than the impression thus produced to lead some poor sinner to go and unfold his conscience to him, while of all who were present there was scarcely one but felt his heart touched by the supernatural charm of his piety. And, if his flock were attached to him, he indeed loved his flock with the love of a true shepherd, and he would have desired nothing better than to devote the rest of his life to them. Yet, all the time, he was ardently longing for what was incompatible with such a desire. His habitual aspiration after

foreign missionary work increased instead of diminishing, and this seemed to justify him in thinking that the movement came from God. So pressing, indeed, had it become in the third year of his priesthood that, in his humility, he believed that God would never have allowed so many obstacles to his supposed vocation to arise save for his own tepidity and want of energy. Then he would resolve to reform his conduct and make experiment of the apostolic life—such as he conceived and desired it—by new privations and increased austerities, hoping thus to dispose himself better for fulfilling what he was persuaded was the Divine will in his regard.

In the August of this year, 1836, Mme. Muard, feeling her end approaching, sent for her son, who had thus the consolation of assisting his mother, whom he tenderly loved, in her last moments. As she was about to depart she looked troubled for an instant; then, turning her dying eyes towards him, she said, in a voice almost extinct, that, perhaps, she was the cause of his not having gone on the Foreign Missions; that she accused herself of this, and asked his forgiveness for having opposed his good designs. "Mother," he replied, "have no anxiety on that account; you have no forgiveness to ask of me. If I have not gone on the Foreign Missions, it is because the good God has not willed that I should." God had not willed it; it was through the voice of his superior, to him the representative of God, that he knew this. Hitherto the Archbishop of Sens, Mgr. de Cosnac, had been deaf to the solicitations which he had more than once respectfully urged. That prelate, in fact, so highly valued the young priest whom his diocese had the happiness of possessing that he was most unwilling to part with

him, particularly when there were so many parishes lacking pastors. Had he numbered a few more years of priesthood the Archbishop would gladly have made him his Vicar-General, for a vacancy in the office occurred about that time. Since, however, he could not do this he kept him in his eye for future promotion; and whenever M. Muard made any fresh attempt to obtain his consent he would hold out prospects nearer home of some honourable field of labour. But what was an honourable career, what was promotion, to him whose sole ambition was to toil, poor and unknown, in some barbarous land and, after winning many souls to the faith, die a martyr's death? He bore these repeated refusals, however, without being discouraged, because he was convinced that God would remove all difficulties from his path.

Meanwhile, if he happened to meet any of his intimate friends, he would console himself by allowing free expression to the longings of his heart and giving his imagination full scope to indulge in visions of persecutions, sufferings, tortures, as others build castles in the air about their earthly wishes. One day a friend arrived late in the evening at the presbytery of Joux-la-Ville. It was in the month of September, 1837. The sun had already set, the weather was lovely, so, when supper was finished, M. Muard proposed to go into the garden, where they would have undisturbed privacy under the beautiful vault of heaven. There was but one topic between the two priests as they alternately sat and walked, went and came, and took sweet converse together. Time flew by, unnoted by M. Muard, all absorbed as he was in the engrossing theme of their discourse, while his friend well-nigh forgot his fatigue and the lateness of the hour under the spell of

his companion's ardent charity. Midnight struck unheeded, and the late hours of one day were converted into the early hours of the next; light was dawning, and the sun about to appear on the horizon, yet M. Muard knew nothing of it. The sound of the church-bell recalled him at last from his pious dreams. "What is that?" he exclaimed. "The *Angelus?*" "Impossible!" It was true, however; so they both knelt down, and, with the archangel, saluted the Mother of the Word made flesh. Then, rising, M. Muard begged pardon of his friend for having caused him to pass such a night of unrest, but he, on his part, declared that it was one of the happiest he had ever spent. "Well," resumed M. Muard, "it is too late now to think of going to bed, so, if you please, we will go to the church and say our office."

This little incident may serve to show how undeserved were the reproaches which a few months later he received in a letter from his old master, the Abbé Rolley, for having given up the poor heathen, of whom he had promised to be the shepherd. If he had not obtained permission before this time, it could only be for want of earnest solicitation. Others had been waiting in order to accompany him. Let him, then, say whether or no they could reckon any longer on his promise. That earnest solicitations had not been lacking we have seen, but M. Muard now resolved to make another attempt to move Mgr. de Cosnac. His letter was at once both forcible and pathetic; representing to the Archbishop the anguish he endured through this prolonged suspense, and imploring him in the humblest terms to relieve him from so painful a state by giving him the episcopal sanction which he had sought so long. He felt almost sure of success this time, and

took a neighbouring priest into his confidence. His *confrére*, however, played him false, for, sharing the Archbishop's, not to say the general, opinion that the loss of so good an example in the diocese would be irreparable, he communicated with Mgr. de Cosnac on the subject in a spirit anything but calculated to forward M. Muard's views, since he rather suggested means adapted to detain him than advanced aught to second his suit. Some time elapsed, during which the letter of the Curé of Joux-la-Ville remained unanswered, but he augured well from this delay, which he considered to indicate a definite solution of the question. A definite determination was, indeed, about to be made, but far other than that which he had hopefully anticipated.

These applications to his ecclesiastical superior were not the only measures he had adopted with a view to the attainment of his desire. The circumstance we are about to mention must have occurred previously to this final request, but we cannot fix the precise date. M. Muard had a talent for mechanics, and, as we have observed, an inventive turn. Being persuaded that the possession of an organ was a great desideratum in a church, he was anxious that, if possible, such an advantage should be attainable even by the smallest parishes. Now, the greatest difficulty in the way was not so much the cost of the organ, which liberality might supply, as the difficulty of finding an efficient organist. Accordingly, he set his mind to work to contrive an instrument which could be used independently of such aid; and we are told that, so far as the mechanism was concerned, he was successful, but, as he had only a limited knowledge of music, he required assistance for the arrangement of the notes. This he found in a blind musician who went about from door to

door with his violin to gain his livelihood. Beggar as he was, he was a gifted player, and could bring tones out of his instrument which surprised and delighted his hearers. He could, for instance, give an admirable imitation of a chase. You seemed to hear the hunting-horn, the barking of the dogs, the report of guns, the shouts of the sportsmen.* What might be the difference between the instrument fabricated by M. Muard and a grinding-organ we could not say, nor is it a matter of much interest, since the invention appears to have had no practical results. Some excellence, however, it must have possessed, for the Abbé Brullée tells us that he obtained from Government a diploma of invention for it. Be that as it may—and judging from M. Muard's own words on the subject we are led to doubt the fact—he was certainly supposed to have gone to Paris on that business; and he allowed the public to remain under this impression, as it served to veil the real motive of his journey.

When once at the capital, he could do what he pleased and go where he liked unobserved; and his first visit on arriving was to the Superior of the Foreign Missions. To him he opened his heart, and it is needless to say that he was listened to with warm interest and sympathy, but when, on inquiry, the Superior found that he had not obtained the permission of his bishop, and was not encouraged to hope that it would be easily obtained, he replied that, strictly speaking, they were

* Whoever can remember the blind piper of Killarney, old Gansey, and had the good fortune to hear his really marvellous performance of the "Tipperary Hunt," will be strongly reminded of him by this description. No one who saw him execute it can ever forget the appearance of the venerable old man, with his sightless balls and his resemblance, when performing on the Irish bagpipes, to some ancient Gaelic bard.

competent to receive him without an *exeat* from his ordinary, but that it was not their practice ever to avail themselves of this power, being unwilling to disoblige their spiritual lords, the Bishops. Nor do we think that M. Muard himself would have taken any step without Mgr. de Cosnac's sanction, but he may probably have thought that, if the Superior of the Foreign Missions agreed to accept him, such acceptance would have great weight with the Archbishop. He returned to Joux-la-Ville still cherishing the hope that, sooner or later, his desire would be fulfilled, and he would be sent to evangelize the heathens, leaving his parish, as he expressed it, "in worthier hands than his own". He was to leave it sooner than he expected, but not in the way that he either expected or desired.

While he was awaiting the reply to his last earnest appeal, the Abbé Santigny, Curé of St. Martin's at Avallon, who had been a confessor of the faith during the Revolution, died, and the Archbishop resolved to appoint M. Muard to the vacant parish. Accordingly he wrote to him, expressing his sorrow at having heard that he had been suffering in health, which he attributed to his having over-exerted himself during Lent, but he was intending to remove him to a post which he thought would be more suitable to him than Joux-la-Ville, namely, the parish of St. Martin in the town of Avallon, which had just fallen vacant. The nature of the exertions which he would there be called upon to make would not be so exhausting to his bodily strength; on the other hand, a person of experience, and gifted with talents such as Providence had bestowed on him, was needed in that place. Mgr. de Cosnac added that he knew he would have objections to make on the subject, but he was too well acquainted

with his sentiments to fear that he would offer any opposition, or be willing to give him pain by refusing. Moreover, he could not yield to his wishes; the good of religion forbade it. He concluded by saying that the virtue of obedience was what M. Muard was called upon at this moment to practise.

On receiving this unexpected and, to him, most distressing letter, he set off at once for Sens, hoping to prevail on Mgr. de Cosnac to reverse his decision. But when he reached Vermenton he was so unwell as to find it impossible to proceed; so he retraced his steps to Joux-la-Ville, and wrote a letter to the Archbishop imploring him not to impose this fresh burden upon him. If he could not permit him to go on the Foreign Missions, he besought him, at least, to let him remain in his present position. Monseigneur, he said, had been long aware of the repugnance he had ever felt for the charge of a parish, a repugnance which made him continually sigh for the loosing of his chains. "How," he asked, "with a vocation like mine, could I with pleasure see myself placed in a town? In a town! I who have always held towns in aversion, and who am at best only fit for poor country-people or savages. Ah! Monseigneur, if your Grandeur wishes to make me the most miserable of men, you have only to persevere in your determination." At the same time, he expressed his entire willingness to obey, notwithstanding his dislike to this new mission. This dislike was greatly aggravated by his reluctance to contract new engagements, which he feared would indefinitely postpone the accomplishment of his dearest wishes. In this he was mistaken, for his removal to Avallon was one of the means employed by Providence to insure the success of his future enterprises by plac-

ing him in connection with persons who were to lend him powerful assistance in carrying them out. He himself was aware of this in after years, and, indeed, he was heard to say that, although at the time he did not understand it, his stay at Avallon was a necessary step in his course, as it afforded him a better knowledge of the world, of its needs and of its miseries, than he could otherwise have obtained.

The Archbishop persevered in his resolution notwithstanding M. Muard's remonstrances. "Go," he replied, "to St. Martin's at Avallon; it is there that God wills you to be at present; later on, we shall see." The servant of God bowed his head and submitted. The consternation at Joux-la-Ville when the people learned that they were to lose their beloved pastor was great indeed. There was one general cry of sorrow. The Curé, who fully shared the pain of parting, and who, we are told, at the last moment could hardly tear himself away from the foot of the altar in his dear church, to which he had gone to bid a last adieu, endeavoured in vain to console his children by telling them that God would undoubtedly send in his place a priest according to His heart. One of his pupils, who was a witness of what took place on that day, says that the road was thronged, that the crowd blocked his passage, and pressed close upon him, those who were nearest hanging on to his clothes in their endeavours to detain him. It took an hour, he adds, to get out of the place amidst the tears and sobs of the population. M. Muard was replaced at Joux-la-Ville by the Abbé Gâteau, an excellent priest, who had been vicaire to the late Abbé Santigny.

CHAPTER VII.

Parish-priest of St. Martin's at Avallon.

If there were tears and lamentations at Joux-la-Ville, there was joy and exultation at Avallon. The inhabitants knew M. Muard well by reputation, and he was welcomed on his arrival in the most enthusiastic manner. Monseigneur was officially thanked for his choice, and there was a crowded attendance at the installation of the new Curé, that ceremony being performed by the venerable Archpriest of St. Lazare, the Abbé Moreau, another of the surviving confessors of the faith during the Revolution. M. Muard's opening discourse was chiefly filled with the praises of his revered predecessor, while of himself he spoke in the most modest and depreciating terms. In this he was but expressing his genuine sentiments; but the young pupil who wrote down the address at his dictation was saying to himself all the time, "Well, that is not true, at any rate". The congregation to whom it was delivered were, no doubt, much of the same opinion. To describe M. Muard's life at Avallon would be to repeat a great deal that has already been said when speaking of him as parish-priest at Joux-la-Ville. There was the same diligence in preaching, teaching, and visiting the sick, the same love of the poor, the same faithful administration of the sacraments. Here, too, as at Joux-la-Ville, he established the practice of holding ecclesiastical conferences. There was, however, a difference in the character of the two places, for the parish of St. Martin contained many families of a superior grade, among whom were not a few highly educated and intellectual men. Their Curé knew per-

fectly how to adapt himself to these altered circumstances, and to win the confidence of all classes.

We get a glimpse of the progress of his own interior life from a rule of conduct which he traced out for his guidance in his new position. This rule consisted of above sixty articles, and he proposed to himself to follow it in a reasonable spirit; that is, avoiding alike both negligence and scrupulous rigour; for rules are designed not to hamper but to be a help to souls. This end was to be secured by walking continually in the presence of God and in the sweet contemplation of Jesus Christ, the model of all perfection. It must have needed a very high vocation to be moved to apportion the hours of every day in such a manner as to leave him not an instant which he could dispose of at his will. This applied even to the time of recreation, which was to be utilised as much as any other season, if not in the same way; often he employed it in some kind of manual labour. In fact, he allowed himself no scrap of time, however short, in which he might, so to say, mentally unbend and seek his repose in the temporary absence of any positive purpose or occupation. He grudged even the suspension of activity incidental to taking rest in sleep. Fain would he have maintained even then the exercise of a loving union with God and of ardent charity for his neighbour. To attain this object as nearly as he could, he interrupted his slumber in the middle of the night to dedicate an hour to prayer. He aimed at leading a life at once active and tranquil. With this view, we find him making resolutions against impulsive action. He will moderate this tendency, so that, while, on the one hand, he desires never to relax in his efforts, or suffer the charity which animates them to cool, he

wishes to have himself in hand, to keep a tight rein on himself, as we might say, abandoning to God the success of all that he undertakes with perfect resignation and patience. When suffering in health, as he occasionally did at this period, or exhausted by fatigue, he will still continue to do his best, but without making superfluous exertions, keeping himself in the presence of God but avoiding too much constraint, and accepting all that He might permit, either to chastise or to prove him, whether it were in the form of exterior trials or the privation of interior consolations. This is but a slight sample of the resolutions he made for his personal guidance, but it may serve to show, not only the exalted standard of perfection which he set before him, but his remarkable discretion and the solidity of his judgment in spiritual matters, the fruit of that supernatural prudence with which he was so eminently gifted.

The regulation of his behaviour to his neighbour bears the same stamp of discriminating wisdom. He wished to combine apostolic zeal with great discretion. God respects our free-will, and His servant always endeavours to follow this divine pattern. He strove, accordingly, to win souls by persuasion and patient instruction rather than try to take them by storm and confound them by argument. This does not imply that he neglected to adduce solid reasons addressed to the understanding, and, indeed, in order at once to enlighten minds and touch hearts, he had established conferences in his church, which drew many hearers even from neighbouring parishes. The zeal and talent with which he met and demolished such objections as incredulity raises against the truths of faith were long remembered in Avallon, and so also were the gentleness and compassion which he manifested for sinners and

for those whose minds had been led astray. He never wounded their feelings or ran athwart their self-love, so that it cost them far less to acknowledge their error; he had smoothed the way for their return. It was by following this course that he made so many conversions; and those even who did not yield to his reasonings could not withhold their admiration, and felt their hearts attracted towards him. Indeed, the general love he inspired before he had spent many months at Avallon was something remarkable; and we are led to ask what was the source of this wonderful power of charming which he possessed. No mere method, however conscientiously and faithfully followed, could account for this gift; for, after all, there is no receipt for winning hearts which is capable of description or can be taught by rule. Rules can point out the faults to be shunned, if we would avoid displeasing, and suggest means for cultivating the qualities which attract, but the charm, the bait which catches the soul, whence is it and what is it?

There can be but one answer. It is the heart which wins hearts. It is love which creates love. M. Muard possessed by nature a heart of exceeding goodness and kindness, and grace had sublimated this natural endowment into a supernatural virtue. This was why men loved him. Rigid and severe to himself, inflicting on his body every species of penance, either to imitate his Lord as a victim of expiation or to punish his slightest shortcomings and imperfections, he was full of the most loving indulgence for others, always taxing his ingenuity to find excuses for them. Every form of suffering, whether physical or moral, moved him to the deepest compassion, as might be unmistakably read in his countenance, perfectly impassible when it was only his

own pains that he had to bear; and so pitiful was he to sinners that he would shed tears of tenderness over a returning prodigal. He was quite aware of the uncontrollable softness of his heart in this respect, and used to reassure himself by saying that, if our Lord should one day reproach him with having carried kindness to excess, he would excuse himself by alleging his Master's own example, who had treated him, and innumerable other sinners, with so much forbearance and mercy. Of his patience and generosity in the forgiveness of injuries we need say nothing, as it will be fully exemplified in the record of his life. His greatest delight was to render good for evil and, next to that, to benefit those who never could repay him. It would be endless work to attempt to specify all the different forms in which his benevolence found its outlet. It is sufficient to say that this man of God was as remarkable for all those delicate touches of personal friendship, family affection, and refined courtesy which are so endearing in the intercourse of life, as if his heart had not been consumed with the love of God and devoured with hunger for souls. These higher and dominant passions never detracted aught from that human and homely loveliness of disposition which is appreciable by all.

Nevertheless, with all the gentleness, sweetness, and indulgence which characterised his conduct and drew others to him, as by a magnet, he could be firm, as we have seen, when duty required; and even his almost boundless condescension to the wishes of his brethren in the priesthood had its limits; witness what he himself in after days related as having occurred at Avallon. He had added splendour to the solemnity of Benediction on feast-days, besides giving an instruction on

these occasions. The success of the first essay which he made far surpassed his expectations, for the church was crowded to excess. Accordingly, he continued the practice; but, when the Abbé Bernard, Canon of the metropolitan church of Sens, was preaching during Lent at St. Lazare, he was extremely discontented with M. Muard on account of these attractive services, and complained of his having meant to enter into a kind of rivalry with him, the result of which had been to draw away his hearers and thin his congregation. Such ideas were not likely to approve themselves to M. Muard. Had the cases been reversed, and any friend had suggested to him that he was being wronged, he would, like Moses of old, have exclaimed, "*Quid æmularis pro me? Quis tribuat ut omnis populus prophetet?*"* He did not, he said, feel himself in any way obliged to attend to such observations; he was bound to consult the interests of his own parishioners, and in so doing was keeping strictly within the limits of his duty, with no intention of competing with the Abbé Bernard; and so he pursued his way, always guided by prudence, but disregarding human respect.

His attraction to the Foreign Missions continued unabated, and it was the source of much interior torture to him. He was like one torn asunder by conflicting forces. Yet he could not doubt but that God was calling him to missionary work, since, with every motive which could bind a priest to his parish, and notwithstanding the persistent refusal of his bishop to release him, he still felt himself drawn in that direction. So great, indeed, was the ardour with which he was inflamed that he said to one with whom he could

* "Why hast thou emulation for me? Oh, that all the people might prophesy!"—Numbers xi. 29.

speak freely, "If I saw on one side Heaven open, and God inviting me to come and take my place in that blessed abode, and on the other the possibility of flying to the Foreign Missions, gaining souls to Jesus Christ, and then dying a martyr, I would say to God, 'Souls, Lord, first, many souls, and Heaven afterwards!'" His ideas, however, were about to undergo a modification. As he began to see that it was utterly hopeless that he should ever obtain permission to go and labour among the heathen he reverted to the project of diocesan missions; here he hoped that he might not encounter the same obstacles.

It was not a less difficult enterprize in itself, but rather a far more difficult one, to which he was now directing his thoughts and his prayers. The state of minds in France at that time was such that there was a hundredfold more hope of success in addressing savages, who had never received the glad tidings of salvation, than in preaching in a land where grace had been despised and rejected. The scoff and the sneer at holy things were on the lips of all, children even not excepted; neither was the hideous evil confined to the towns, it infected the rural districts also. Infamous journals ridiculing all that was pure and good and Christian, especially attacking and maligning the priests of God, and not sparing God himself, poisoned the minds and corrupted the imaginations of multitudes. "It was," as the Abbé Brullée says, "like a general conspiracy of little and great, of princes and people, against all that was good; nothing was valued save unbelief, amusement, places, and money. Wherever any one showed himself to be a Christian he was assailed with calumny, insulted by the press, outlawed by his fellow-creatures." Humanly speaking, the idea

of founding a religious house amidst all these hostile influences, and of organising missions to people who, not only did not desire them, but, it was to be feared, might manifest their aversion in some unpleasant manner, was an extravagant notion. M. Muard was not blind to these difficulties, which were more than sufficient to discourage any one who relied on himself. But he never relied on himself; all his confidence was in God. A torrent of evil was menacing to engulf everything: religion, society, the family; God's all-powerful arm alone could oppose a dyke and arrest the threatened ruin. But it is through feeble instruments that He is commonly pleased to work, and their feebleness matters nothing; rather does it glorify His omnipotence. The voice of God in his heart was, he believed, calling him to the rescue; he could not in conscience disregard it, or postpone action any longer. And so he inwardly groaned, he prayed, he added to his austerities and penitential exercises, in order to impetrate the strength and the means to put his project in execution.

In the Advent of 1839 he was led to give a quasi-mission at Pontaubert, in the vicinity of Avallon. Having been unavoidably hindered from keeping his promise to the Curé of that place, who had asked him to preach on the feast of his Patron, he proposed to make amends by giving some instructions at the church of Pontaubert during the approaching season of Advent, but he had also in his mind secretly to make an experiment. His *confrère* joyfully accepted the offer, and M. Muard preached two or three times during the first week, when the attendance was so very large, people flocking in also from the neighbouring parishes, that he resolved to go there daily. The station was

prolonged to the feast of the Epiphany, 1840, and closed with a general communion and the solemn erection of a commemorative cross. No less than three thousand persons were gathered at the foot of the little rocky eminence on which the sign of our salvation was planted, and every heart was moved by the words of the missionary, so full of joy and holy eloquence, in which he spoke of the blessings flowing to us from the Sacred Tree on which the world's Redeemer hung. But who could tell what was passing in the soul of him who addressed them? On that ever-memorable day he gave himself to God irrevocably for the institution of Diocesan Missions.

It was not the signal success of this experimental mission which had produced M. Muard's strong confidence in his special vocation, although in itself it was a very encouraging mark of the Divine favour. He believed that he had received a supernatural communication from his Lord, which his humility would have led him to bury in the secrecy of his own bosom, had not his sense of duty compelled him subsequently to reveal it to the friends who were associated with him in his great undertaking. We will relate it in his own words, as left by him in writing.

"On Friday, the 13th of December, 1839, I was in my stall at St. Martin's of Avallon, beside the altar. I was praying and complaining to God that He did not make known to me His will in regard to diocesan missions; and it seemed to me as if three several times He said to me, 'I wish you to be holy,' and at once I comprehended all my misery, and all that I ought to do to correspond with His designs, and I begged of Him the grace to arrive at the sanctity which He required of me. Then I found myself, as it were,

transported in spirit to the centre of the altar, that is, to the place where the priest stands to offer the Holy Sacrifice. I appeared to be on my knees, and I saw in spirit the Tabernacle open, and our Lord partially issue from it, and make the sign of the cross on my forehead with the first Finger of His Right Hand. I remained for an instant filled with wonder, nevertheless my imagination was not active, I was in a purely passive state; I saw and I felt in spirit; I admired, but I did not act. A moment after, our Lord made with the same Finger a cross on my heart; my surprise and my wonder were redoubled, and my heart bounded as it felt the impression of the Divine Finger. Finally, our Lord, always with the same Finger, and after the interval of a second, made the sign of the cross on my mouth. The cross on the forehead denoted intelligence and intrepidity; the cross on the heart, the love of God and the burning zeal which missionaries ought to have for the conversion of souls; and the cross on the mouth signified the gift of words which should be bestowed upon them. This was clearly manifested to me, and all these things filled my soul with sentiments impossible to express. Suddenly I felt myself urged to say to our Lord, 'But what pledge, Lord, dost Thou give me that this project will be accomplished?' 'My Heart,' Jesus immediately replied, and He seemed to be holding It in His Hands and presenting It to me from out the Tabernacle. This prompt reply of Jesus, which I did not foresee, singularly impressed me. I was confounded for an instant, lost in the feelings which all these things produced in my soul. Then I prayed, and, no doubt, I besought God that I might love Him; and I felt the Heart of Jesus touch my heart, as if my Saviour had actually placed It close to mine and

really touched it. I cannot express what I then experienced, and I know not how my poor heart could sustain this impression; all that I know is that it was for me a heavenly moment, a divine moment.

"I felt myself then in a state of complete detachment from all creatures. I could not understand how any one could cleave to earth. Relations, friends, all were for me as not existing. In this state of absolute separation from creatures Jesus made me understand that He would be in the place of all to me; that He would be my father and the Blessed Virgin would be my mother. During all this time, as I have said, my imagination did not work at all; I was in a purely passive state, I received divine impressions, I did not seek them. Touched by so many graces, and so clear a manifestation of the will of God respecting the project I had so much at heart, I made a vow to go to Rome to visit the tombs of SS. Peter and Paul, and receive the Apostolic benediction before commencing the missions, if our project succeeded, which I felt convinced it would."

Notwithstanding his conviction, however, that he had received a divine intimation, M. Muard considered it to be his duty to adopt every precaution against illusion in a matter of this kind, and he besought our Lord to grant him some proofs of the truth of what he believed that he had seen and heard. He received many. The following was very striking, and is related by himself. He had been labouring for some time to convert six obstinate sinners, but the prospect seemed utterly hopeless. One day he entreated our Lord to touch their hardened hearts, as a testimony to the reality of his new vocation, and that very evening all the six came to present themselves at the confessional.

M. Muard also regarded the success of the mission at Pontaubert as another proof. In short, he received so many that he could no longer hesitate, and it was only question now of the means of execution. Episcopal sanction was the first essential. Accordingly, after many prayers, fasts, and mortifications, he wrote to his archbishop, selecting Friday as the day, because it is dedicated to the Heart of Jesus. What that letter may have been we may, indeed, imagine, but it has unfortunately not been found. All we know is that it made Mgr. de Cosnac shed abundant tears, and that he was vanquished by its moving appeal. "O priest," he wrote in reply, "great is your zeal; go and do as God shall inspire you."

We need not say that this long-delayed consent brought joy to the heart of M. Muard, but this joy did not come alone; it had its accompaniment of pains, anxieties, and crosses. There were, first, all the pangs of separation from his beloved people to anticipate and dread, no slight suffering for a loving heart like his; and then there was the new career opening before him with all the sacrifices, duties, and responsibilities which it would involve. Would he be equal to bearing the burden which he was about to assume or, rather, which had been laid upon him? Herein, indeed, he found his hope and support; when God says, Go,—and in this case he had done so, first in vision and then by the mouth of superiors,—He pledges Himself to supply the strength needed to execute His commission. M. Muard knew, then, that he could rely upon Divine aid, but only as using the appointed means: to act otherwise is, not to confide, but to presume. "Ask and it shall be given:" here are the means, and to fervent prayer the servant of God had accordingly recourse as usual. He sought

also to obtain the prayers of others, not indiscriminately, but selecting as his assistants devout souls who would truly interest themselves in the great work; and thus a small association of prayers was established by him. Seven persons chose each of them one day in the week when they should occupy themselves specially in praying for the success of the undertaking, offering their communion for the same intention. The associates were also to meet every day at three o'clock in the Adorable Heart of Jesus, to implore the needful grace and help for the missionaries and for their hearers. To Mary also, who can obtain what she wills from the Heart of her Divine Son, they daily recommended this work of the missions, placing it under the patronage of her most holy and immaculate Heart. The leader of this little band was a very pious lady, not one of M. Muard's parishioners, but belonging to St. Lazare. The Abbé Moreau, Curé of that parish, having resigned, in order to spend the remainder of his days at the hospital in silence and retreat, she had sought the direction of M. Muard. To her he confided all his designs, begging her to pray and engage others to pray for the removal of every obstacle which stood in the way of his vocation. Years afterwards, long subsequently to the death of her holy director, she said to one of his disciples, alluding to that period, "The devout ladies of St. Martin were not pleased. They thought I used to stay too long in the confessional, but it was not my fault. It was P. Muard who detained me in order to explain all he wished to do, and get me to pray for his work."

When the report spread in the parish of St. Martin that M. le Curé was about to leave, the painful trials which he had foreseen commenced. It was not only

his flock but all his friends, kith and kin, who united in pathetic supplications to him not to forsake them. His old father came over twice from Tanlay, where he now resided, to cast himself at his feet and implore him to wait until the tomb had closed over him before putting his design in execution. The churchwardens of St. Martin made him the most liberal pecuniary offers to induce him to remain; they would give him whatever he desired. Money, certainly, would never have tempted him, nor even the thought of the good which money might effect, but the marks of confidence thus manifested deeply affected him, and his heart was lacerated by the grief of his aged parent, but all was of no avail to shake his purpose. M. de Montigny, a worthy old gentleman of the place, was also very earnest in his entreaties. He could not live long, he said; let his pastor only put off his departure until he had aided him to make his passage from time to eternity. "When you have closed my eyes," he added, "you may go upon the missions." M. Muard, when besieged by these and similar appeals, was ready to exclaim with St. Paul, "What do you mean, weeping and afflicting my heart?"* But go he must. It was the will of God; he had no choice in the matter. When, however, all was finally arranged, his successor appointed, the day of departure fixed, and he went to pay a farewell visit to M. de Montigny, the old man asked him if he had any money for his journey. No, he had none. "Return to-morrow," said M. de Montigny, "and you shall have some." He returned, and the old man gave him 1,400 francs, telling him that, if that was not sufficient, he should have more. M. Muard thanked him, and said that he did not believe

* Acts xxi. 13.

that he should expend so large a sum. "Well," replied his aged parishioner, "it is yours to make what use of it you please." Thus it was that Divine Providence supplied the expenses of his journey and his noviciate, for it was not his intention to enter on his missionary career without having made preparatory study and undergone a training for the work.

In the sketch we have endeavoured to give of this holy priest's parochial labours, and of the life of mortification and self-sacrifice, external and internal, which he was inspired to lead, no allusion has been made to an interior suffering which he endured for a length of time, and which would have for ever remained unknown had he not subsequently mentioned it to a beloved disciple and companion. "For nearly three years," he said, "I was under the influence of nervous impressions, but chiefly while I was at St. Martin's. During all this time I never lay down to rest without a strong conviction that I should expire in the course of the night, and this expectation of dying in a state of sleep distressed me much." Whether it was the enemy of souls who thus afflicted this holy man, whom he must have singularly hated, or whether this feeling was the result of physical depression, who can say? Perhaps both had a share. When we remember how naturally irritating are all nervous affections, the knowledge of a circumstance of this kind tends to increase our admiration for one who, not only always preserved the most perfect equanimity of temper and an invariable cheerfulness, but the serenity and sweetness of whose countenance, the soul's unfailing mirror, was at all times remarkable as one of his striking characteristics.

CHAPTER VIII.

With the Marist Fathers. Visit to Rome.

Père Muard—as for the future we shall call him—did not wish to begin alone the work of the Diocesan Missions, and God provided him with an associate in the Abbé Bravard, one of the clergy attached to the cathedral of Sens. They conferred together, and, with the assent of the Archbishop, agreed to make their missionary noviciate at Lyons with the Marist Fathers, who were successfully evangelizing the parishes of that large diocese, Mgr. de Cosnac furnishing the Abbé Bravard with a letter of recommendation to the Superior. He joined his future associate at Avallon, and the two missionaries set out together on a rainy October morning for their destination. They were welcomed by the Marist Fathers as friends and brethren, and they were, moreover, most cordially received by the Archbishop of Lyons, to whom they had been also given a letter of introduction by Mgr. de Cosnac. Letters from P. Muard to different persons, and chiefly those written for the benefit of his helpers in the association for prayer at Avallon, acquaint us with what occurred of most interest during his ten months' absence, and with his feelings in regard thereto. Upon these we shall draw, either in the way of quotation or by giving the substance of what he communicates to his correspondents.

From Lyons he writes, soon after his arrival, "All goes well so far. Lyons appears to me a very Christian city. One loves to observe the air of piety which marks the countenances of the greater number, and it is particularly edifying to note the large proportion of

men in the churches and their good behaviour. A multitude of establishments and pious associations marvellously aid in keeping up devotion. There is, perhaps, no town more solidly Christian than Lyons. Do not fancy, however, that there are none but saints here; corruption and scandal exist at Lyons as well as everywhere else; but it may be truly said that there is more piety than in other places." Of Notre Dame de Fourvières he speaks with enthusiasm. He had long desired to visit his "good Mother" in this her highly venerated sanctuary. "Oh, if you knew," he says, "how well they pray at Fourvières, how well Mass is said, how your devotion is increased by seeing yourself surrounded with thousands of *ex-votos*, so many testimonies to miracles worked through Mary's intercession! How edifying it is to behold this continual stream of persons, of all ranks and all ages, going to pay their homage to the Queen of Heaven; to see the church always filled, particularly in the mornings, when so many communions are received, and when the Adorable Sacrifice is offered without ceasing until mid-day, by priests from every diocese, who reckon themselves happy to be able to celebrate Mass in this holy place! I, too, had this happiness, and the first Mass I said at Lyons was in the beloved church of my good Mother. Oh, how I recommended to her the great affair of the missions, how I prayed for all the members of our little society, how I recommended to her each in particular! You will tell them"—he is writing to the lady mentioned above as being at its head—"that the Blessed Virgin looks with favour on this pious association, as does her Divine Son, and that we must render ourselves worthy of the patronage of Mary by an increased sanctity of life. Tell them that I recommend them specially to

the good God, as also my parish of St. Martin and, indeed, all Avallon, of which I preserve a very dear remembrance." Then he tells her how he is writing to her in his cell, which is to him a Paradise.

He was sent on his first mission a fortnight after his arrival. It was given at Rive-de-Gier, a town containing from fourteen to fifteen thousand inhabitants, situated between Lyons and Saint-Etienne. He describes them as mainly consisting of glass-founders and of men labouring in the coal-pits, a thousand or twelve hundred feet underground. P. Muard and his companion were set to work at once, "preaching and confessing as if they had been old missionaries". They were five in number. Three great exercises were given during the day, and the rest of the time was devoted to the confessional. "Better than ever," he says, "do I now recognise my true vocation to be that of a missionary. Oh, what a pleasure is it to announce the word of God in that character what a happiness to see a multitude of faithful of all ages and classes crowding eagerly into a large church, almost heaped together, to listen to God's word; how animating, how inspiring, it is to behold a congregation composed of above three thousand persons, all hearkening with a religious attention to sermons lasting more than an hour! But what is most consoling is to see so many men, so many old sinners, surrounding the confessional and presenting themselves with faith at the Holy Table. This sight kindles zeal, rejoices the heart, and makes one feel happy to have left all for a ministry which fills the soul with so much consolation. Yesterday evening was the close of a novena to the Blessed Virgin. We gave the holy scapular to more than three or four hundred persons, many others having received it nine

days before, while more are preparing to receive it. It is edifying to see the number of men assuming the holy livery of Mary, and this with such strong marks of devotion." He promises to give the result of the mission when it is concluded. "In the meantime," he adds, "pray the Lord to bless our labours at Rive-de-Gier, and so to dispose hearts in the diocese of Sens that we may do for our unhappy people in those parts what we are doing here."

The mission was prolonged for six weeks, during which the communicants numbered from seven to eight thousand, about a third of whom were men. Three thousand, perhaps, of these poor people had not approached the sacraments for a long time. "Judge," he writes, "if you can, of the joy we feel. But the fatigue has also been great. We had to hear confessions the whole of the day and part of the night, and to take only four or five hours' sleep, often less, but the good God gave us strength, and I never passed such happy moments as in the midst of those consoling occupations. I was often six, seven, and even eight consecutive hours in the confessional, but I was never wearied of it." Labouring for the salvation of souls which had been long under the empire of sin was his delight. The good dispositions in which he now saw so many of these lost sheep, and particularly the men, made him supremely happy. This is a subject to which, we may observe, he often recurs. He could record conversions, he said, which had in them something of the miraculous. They were prodigies of grace, brought about by persevering and united prayer. "Such instances," he says, after relating one, "are not rare; it is a wonderful thing to see how powerfully grace acts at these times; few of those who follow the mission

can resist it. Thus, in spite of the evil dispositions of some among them at the beginning, in spite of all the efforts of Hell, which never fail to be directed to thwart success, at the end of a few weeks the whole place seems moved, all gives way, and grace triumphs." Grace, indeed, seems to acquire, as it were, a sort of momentum as missions proceed. This must strike the observation of all who have any experience of them in our own country, particularly in populous districts. How often may one not hear the remark made by some of the best among the poorer classes, when the mission is about to close--"What a pity that it is not to go on a week or fortnight longer; it is just beginning to tell on people!" We need scarcely add that, if this be matter of regret, it is certainly not of censure. Prolonged missions cannot well be maintained where but two missionaries can usually be spared for the work, and that work is needed in so many places. At Rive-de-Gier, we have seen, there was more than double the number conducting the mission. After speaking of the intimate union which his soul had enjoyed with the Sacred Heart of Jesus during the whole time, P. Muard adds that they are all in capital health, fatigue only giving them an appetite.

His report of the second mission is also very satisfactory. In a parish numbering eighteen hundred souls there were only about fifteen individuals who refused to go to confession. "We are about to begin another next Sunday," he writes. "Pray on, pray always, with your dear associates, that our Lord may grant increase to the plants we are about to water, for in prayer, in prayer alone, is our strength. It seems as if we felt, so to say, when we are prayed for; so much good does it do us, and so much does it help us."

He then proceeds to acquaint his correspondent with two things which greatly occupied his mind as matter of debate, and he suggests a novena for this intention to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. In the first place, the Marist Fathers were very desirous that the two missionaries should join their society, and P. Muard's companion felt inclined to assent to the proposal. P. Muard, however, said that, if he remained with the Fathers, it would only be on the express condition that they should found a missionary-house in the diocese of Sens. So far from suffering, the diocese might gain by this arrangement, as a missionary establishment would thus be more easily formed, and would be less likely to lack subjects. For himself and the Abbé Bravard, personally, the plan also offered advantages; for, if they were attached to this religious body, and it should eventually be found that missions were practically impossible in the diocese of Sens, they would still be missionaries, and could prosecute their vocation elsewhere, perhaps even in the New World. We can perceive here a loving eye still cast towards his dear savages. However, he felt that there was another side to the question, and the reasons in its favour appeared to have greater weight. He had a strong impression that this was not what God desired of him, and he had something like a conviction that, if he joined the Marists, it would be a cause of remorse to him for the remainder of his days. "This," he says to his correspondent, "may possibly surprise you, but I will tell you my reason. Our work was commenced under the patronage of the Heart of Jesus; the Heart of Jesus was given as the pledge of its success; and it seems to me that it would be doing an injury to that Sacred Heart, which has

shown us so much goodness and granted us so many graces, if we did not choose It as the sole patron of our work. This thought occupies me constantly. I feel myself, as it were, sweetly drawn to the Heart of Jesus; I believe that it is His will that we should be His, entirely His, and that, instead of being Priests of the Society of Mary, we should be Priests of the Heart of Jesus."

But here a great difficulty presented itself. Since it was their desire not to remain secular priests, but to be true religious, bound by vows, it would be necessary, unless they joined some existing Order, to form a new religious congregation. No slight undertaking: this was obvious. What, then, was he to do? "I think of all this," he says, "but I am in the hands of God, with an abandonment which surpasses me. I understand all the difficulties, nevertheless it seems to me that the Heart of Jesus wills it." The other subject of his reflections was the vow he had made to visit the tombs of the Apostles and obtain the benediction of the Holy Father before entering on his work in the diocese, supposing the grace of becoming a missionary was accorded to him. This vow had been made conditional on his receiving the permission of the Archbishop, but the thought now suggested itself to him whether it was absolutely necessary that he should ask for it. He had money enough for the journey, so that he had nothing to request on that score; yet, if he applied for leave, he must be prepared to acquiesce in a possible refusal, although persuaded that he should thereby forfeit great spiritual advantages. On the other hand, if he went without the Archbishop's sanction, he would lose the benefit of his recommendation at Rome. But what weighed most with him was the repugnance he could not but feel to taking such a step without his authoriza-

tion. On this subject, then, he also desired to have the opinion and prayers of his correspondent.

The third mission entailed still more labour than had the two former; and this on account of the large influx of people from the adjoining parishes, who daily besieged the church door before it was opened, ready to rush in and secure their places as near as possible to the confessionals, the rich sending their servants, or paying persons, to keep theirs for them. P. Muard mentions having found one poor woman near his confessional at three o'clock in the afternoon still fasting. She had remained on from early morning in order not to lose her turn. He was much struck by the lively faith and piety displayed by the population of these districts, as contrasted with the apathy and indifference prevalent in the diocese of Sens. "But the good God," he says, "is all-powerful, and can raise to life, as we hope, so many souls long dead to His grace." This mission was terminated by the erection of a beautiful cross. The inhabitants of three adjoining parishes, almost all of whom had attended the mission, came in procession to the ceremony bearing crosses and splendid banners, the guilds also carrying their standards. This magnificent procession extended for near half a league. The day was one of great enjoyment to our holy man, but of much fatigue to him and the other missionaries, who were not able to take a moment's rest. "In the evening," he says, "I was thoroughly exhausted; I had run about so much among the ranks. However, I made amends to myself, for I played the sluggard for two days, giving myself a good twelve hours' repose at night. I really needed it, for while the mission lasted we could not go to bed until after midnight, being often still in the confessional at eleven

o'clock, and having to rise again at a very early hour."

When writing the above he was about to start for a mission at Ferrières, in the diocese of Moulins, and in the vicinity of Vichy. This mission was to last until the beginning of May. "You see," he adds, "we have no time to ourselves, none to write letters, none even for prayer. We are barely able to say our office, all the rest of our time is passed in the confessional." His health he reported as good, except that during the last mission he had suffered from a complaint in his throat, a prevalent epidemic, which for three days prevented him from speaking without much difficulty and painful exertion. It distressed him greatly, because he was unable for a time to hear confessions, but he had the consolation of observing how attached the poor people were to their missionaries. They were miserable at seeing him so ill, and used to send him bonbons, emollient pastes, dates, or whatever they thought would benefit his throat; and when he was able to resume his labours they evinced the greatest satisfaction. After having pretty well made up his mind to set out for Rome, without apprizing the Archbishop, he again became disturbed and uncomfortable upon the subject: something, he thought, seemed wanting to him without the assent and approbation of his ecclesiastical superior. While in the act of resolving, after all, to write to him, a letter from his correspondent, who saw the thing in the same light, came to confirm him in his purpose. He received a most satisfactory and encouraging reply from Mgr. de Cosnac, who enclosed him letters of recommendation to two influential prelates, one being Auditor of the Rota for France and the other the *Chargé d'affaires* for the diocese of Sens.

Before departing for Rome with P. Séhon, a Marist Father who accompanied him, and for whose journey he was enabled to pay out of the money given him by M. de Montigny, he had gone with the same Father to visit the Curé of Ars, whom he desired to consult with respect to his projects. They sought him in his presbytery, and that saintly man replied to P. Muard's inquiries without a moment's hesitation, "You must return to your diocese; do not become a Marist. The good God wills you to be a Diocesan Missionary." From that moment P. Muard ceased to experience any inward conflict regarding this matter, although the Fathers continued to press him earnestly to join them. His companion, P. Séhon, afterwards a missionary in Oceania, ventured to put this direct question to the Curé of Ars: "M. le Curé, is it true that the devil comes and beats you?" "Yes," he rejoined; "that happens whenever any great sinners are coming to Ars to be converted; then he takes his revenge on me."

The two missionaries left Lyons on Friday, the 21st of May, and, after saying Mass at Marseilles on the Sunday morning following, they embarked the same day, having no other choice in the matter, unless they had waited a considerable time for the next packet. The passage was exceedingly rough, but P. Muard, who had an admiring eye for the beauties and grandeur of God's creation, gazed with pleasure on the surging ocean upon whose bosom their vessel was being tossed about like some frail skiff. Probably it was his first experience of the sea. There was no real danger, he said; and then, had they not placed themselves under the sweet protection of Mary by making a pilgrimage to Notre Dame-de-la-Garde and ordering a lamp to be lighted for three days before her altar? "Oh," he

exclaims, "how well can one meditate when on the sea! Our thoughts, restrained and cramped by no obstacle, seem to rise with greater facility towards God." He was charmed with the beauty of Genoa the Superb, where they spent a day, and especially with the rich and magnificent churches. Embarking in the evening, they reached Leghorn the next morning, and had the happiness of offering the Adorable Sacrifice. On the following day they landed at Cività Vecchia, where they tarried as short a time as possible, for he was longing to see Rome. The fifteen leagues which intervened were accomplished in eight hours. "At six o'clock in the evening," he writes, "we descried the famous dome of St. Peter's; and soon the Holy City, the Eternal City, appeared in all its majesty and splendour. I saluted it with profound veneration, this soil which covers so many martyrs; I experienced feelings impossible to describe."

It was late when they alighted from their vehicle, and P. Muard went at once in search of accommodation for the night; but, as to his enquiries in French he got nothing but answers in Italian, he had no other resource but signs, and made himself very ill understood. The practical result, however, seemed to be that every place was full, till at last, at ten o'clock, he succeeded in finding a French hotel, where, in addition to the comfort of a common language, they had the good fortune to be well treated. His first visit on the following morning, as will readily be supposed, was to St. Peter's. Words were inadequate to represent the impression which that grandest of all the churches in the universe made upon him. "One is overwhelmed"—crushed is the term he employs—"by the majesty of that holy place." Later, he hopes to describe all this

by word of mouth, and to speak of the happiness of saying Mass on the very tomb of St. Peter. In Rome (he says) everything is great, everything is a marvel to you. There are two hundred churches, at least, within its precincts, all resplendent with marble and gold and enriched with beautiful paintings, many of the Tabernacles being adorned with precious stones and even the pavement composed of the rarest marbles. But what gave him the greatest pleasure was the spirit of faith which he everywhere witnessed. Miseries and vices were, of course, to be met with wherever there are men; still faith and piety were unmistakably prominent and, in particular, a very special devotion to the Blessed Virgin. In all the houses (he remarks), in the poorest as well as the richest, you find an image or a picture of Our Lady, surrounded with vases of flowers and candles, before which a lamp is lighted in her honour. In every street your eye is constantly resting on devotional representations, and in the very inns and *cafés* Mary has her image and her lamp.

"We assisted," he writes, "at the closing days of the month of May; you cannot form an idea of the pomp displayed in these devotional exercises; every evening there was Solemn Benediction, and I counted forty lustres and as many flambeaux, amounting in all to above 700 lights, at these services of the month of May. The music was admirable; you seemed to be listening to angelic concerts, you fancied yourself in Heaven. On leaving the church you could hear the praises of Mary resounding on all sides; groups of youths walked through the streets singing in chorus the Litanies of the Blessed Virgin, others said the Rosary, or, rather, chaunted it; but I should never end were I to tell you of all the edifying things you

may see in Rome." Such was the Rome of 1841 Alas for the many sad changes that have since been wrought!

On the 8th of June he and his companion were admitted to the presence of the Sovereign Pontiff. "Never," he says, "have I seen in any man so much goodness, sweetness, amenity. We were in all seven priests, and he spoke to each of us as a father and a friend. I kissed with reverence his foot, upon which is the sign of the cross. After bestowing his blessing on us he presented us his ring; I took his hand and pressed my lips to it with the respect and love of a child kissing the hand of a beloved father, or, rather, as that of Jesus Christ Himself, and he responded by pressing mine affectionately, looking at me with a smile full of kindness." But this was not enough for P. Muard; he wanted a blessing for others as well as for himself, so, after the Holy Father had turned to leave them, he followed him and besought a particular blessing for the whole diocese of Sens, for the missions, for the missionaries, and for all who aided and favoured their establishment. He laid them all in spirit at his feet, and received for them in return what he asked and desired. P. Muard was much struck by the sanctity of Gregory XVI., as manifested in his countenance and his whole demeanour, especially while carrying the Blessed Sacrament in the procession of Corpus Christi, when he saw him all-absorbed in adoration and with his face bathed in tears. He speaks most enthusiastically of the graces and favours he has himself received at Rome in rich abundance. Never before had he tasted the gift of God with so much sweetness. Recalling to mind how our Lord appeared to St. Ignatius before the foundation of the Society of

Jesus, and said to him, "Go, I will be favourable to you at Rome," he, too, he says, can bear witness that the Lord had been favourable to him at Rome, and beyond measure good to him; his sole sorrow is the not being able to love as he would a God so infinitely lovable. His great pleasure was to go each day and celebrate Mass on the tomb of some saint who had been most remarkable for his tender love of our Divine Lord; as, for instance, St. Philip Neri, St. Ignatius, St. Aloysius Gonzaga, St. Stanislas Kostka, and others. He often went also to kneel before the relics of saints. Their bones, he said, seemed still to be instinct with the fire of divine love, so that it was like drawing near to a furnace; and here he prayed fervently, not for himself alone, but for his former parishes and for the whole diocese of Sens.

He had a great pleasure still in store after leaving Rome, where he remained until after the feast of SS. Peter and Paul, that of visiting the Holy House of Loreto and of offering Mass on the very spot where the ineffable mystery of the Incarnation was accomplished. On his return to Lyons, P. Muard was again most urgently entreated by the Marist Fathers to join their society, and the painful struggles which had previously agitated his mind were thus in a measure renewed. He wrote on the subject to the Archbishop, who hastened to settle the question by ordering the two missionaries to return forthwith to the diocese of Sens, where a large number of priests were impatiently expecting them. Although rejoiced to know God's will in his regard, as signified by the mouth of superiors, he was none the less afflicted by the separation which was its result. He was warmly attached to these good Fathers, children of Mary, who had received

him with so much brotherly love; but he must now bid them a long farewell, and in doing so must also bid a final adieu to the lingering hope of one day accompanying some among them on the Foreign Missions. This is what he had to resign; what he had to face was the prospect of those countless difficulties which attend on the formation of a new religious family. Both reflections combined to make his departure a sacrifice. Long before, however, had he accepted every cross which his Lord might be pleased to lay upon him. God had now spoken unmistakably, and pointed out the work which He desired of His servant; and that sufficed him.

CHAPTER IX.

First Diocesan Missions. The Abbey of Pontigny.

On his return journey P. Muard turned aside to make a pilgrimage to the tomb of St. John Francis Regis at La Louvesc in the Velay. His way led through the difficult mountain-roads and forests of that district, but an irresistible attraction drew him thither. The Apostle of the Velay is one of the most illustrious patrons of diocesan missionaries. Like P. Muard, he was the devoted confessor and evangelist of the poor, and, like him also, he was filled with the longing desire to join the Foreign Missions. Often did he entreat to be sent to Canada, but could never obtain leave, and he was frequently heard to lament that the palm of martyrdom was snatched from him. We can imagine, then, with what deep interest and holy sympathy P. Muard had read the Life of this saint, and with what delight he embraced the opportunity of visiting his

sanctuary and imploring his patronage when about to enter on his missionary labours. On the 3rd of August, the day on which the Church celebrates the Invention of the Relics of St. Stephen, who is the patron of the diocese of Sens, he made a fresh oblation of his entire self to God at the altar of St. John Francis, renewing his choice of that eminent saint as his model; and on this occasion he again committed to paper his act of consecration and the stringent resolutions he had taken for the regulation of his life in conformity with it. He then proceeded to Avallon, but not empty-handed. He had obtained from the Sovereign Pontiff a precious gift, namely a portion of the relics of St. Clement, wherewith to enrich his late church and parish of St. Martin. They were borne thither in solemn procession, which was long devoutly remembered by those who witnessed it. A yearly novena was also established in honour of St. Clement, which has continued, down to the present day, to produce abundant spiritual fruits.

P. Muard proposed to make Avallon his headquarters. The place was very dear to him, but he was unwilling to be burdensome to any of the clergy by accepting their hospitality when there. Moreover, he had always a great respect for the authority of a curé in his own parish, so that a delicate tact as regarded his successor at St. Martin's combined with the general wish which he always felt to put himself forward as little as possible, to increase his reluctance to obtrude himself in any way. From all embarrassment on this head, however, he was speedily relieved by the spontaneous offer of a pious lady, Mme. Dessignes, one of his old parishioners. Like the Sunamitess, who provided a little chamber in her house for the Prophet

Eliseus when he should pass that way, she esteemed it an honour to receive the man of God under her roof, and placed a room at his disposal whenever he should come to Avallon. He accepted readily, declaring then, as ever, that he was "the spoilt child of Divine Providence". A devoted disciple of P. Muard, whom he treated with much confidence, when relating this circumstance, and alluding to the Father's retiring disposition, which resulted partly from the wish to eclipse himself, partly from the desire to pay due honour to his neighbour and invariably to give him the preference, says that jealousy, which works such mischief among men, was a feeling of which he had habitually no experience. It appears, however, that he had a temptation to it on one occasion many years later. We will quote his companion's account of the matter. "At the commencement of the year 1854, a short time before his departure for the mission of St. Etienne-en-Forez, immediately after some troubles at Vermenton, he said to me one day, 'You would scarcely believe it, but for this last fortnight I have been tormented by jealousy. I shall soon be forty-five years old, and I can truly say that this is the first time that I have ever felt the assaults of that passion. I have difficulty in getting rid of it.' Then he began to laugh at his infirmity, saying, 'I am not sorry to have experienced this temptation, for hitherto, I have been unable to understand it; now I know what it can be, and how much any one is to be pitied who is under its dominion'." The good priest to whom we are indebted for the knowledge of this curious confession adds, "I did not allow myself to inquire into the cause, but I am certain that with his usual simplicity he would have answered my question had I asked it. I must take this opportunity

to state that in all that he has ever told me he spoke spontaneously and as if inwardly moved to do so. For I never questioned him; had I done so, it is probable that many things would have been known which will now remain for ever concealed." While admiring the modesty and self-control of the narrator, and hoping that he acquired much merit by his forbearance, the biographers of P. Muard cannot refrain from expressing some regret that one who enjoyed such exceptional opportunities should not have indulged his holy curiosity a little more. However, we have our own suspicions of what the nature of this harmless and, certainly, unusual species of jealousy may have been, as we shall take the opportunity of suggesting in its proper place.

From Avallon P. Muard proceeded to Sens to see Mgr. de Cosnac, and confer with him about the work of the missions which he was about to enter upon with the Abbé Bravard. The Archbishop assigned to them as their temporary residence the Grand Séminaire at Sens. P. Muard and his associate accepted with gratitude the proffered hospitality. It would have been difficult, indeed, not to say impossible, for them to do otherwise, since as yet they had no mission-house of their own; but they were very far from desiring to consider their arrangement as permanent; and in after years P. Muard said that, rather than take up their definitive abode at Sens, they would have preferred returning to Lyons and joining the Marist Fathers. The pleasing memory which they retained of these good religious must have been further revived at that juncture by the visit, on the very day after their arrival at Sens, of two of their community with whom they had recently been associated in missionary work. They were on the point of departing for the far-off islands of the Pacific, and

the very thought of it sent a thrill through the heart of P. Muard. "They were on their way," he writes, "to Oceania, to evangelize the savages at six thousand leagues distance and, perhaps, give their life for Jesus Christ. . . . It would be difficult to tell you the pleasure it was to us to see and have them with us for a day," a pleasure, however, mingled with pain, for he adds, "I rejoiced at their happiness, but God, for my greater suffering, renewed in me all my old thoughts of going on the Foreign Missions, yet I was fain to resign myself to remain; and this I did, complaining at the same time to God for giving me attractions which He would not allow me to follow". Unable to share the labours and perils of his brethren in carrying the word of life to the heathen, P. Muard did what lay in his power to obtain aid for them, particularly in the form of clothes, of which his friends at Avallon, through which the Fathers had passed on their way to Sens, had also been generous at his request.

It may be interesting to know, as affording an additional testimony to one of P. Muard's distinguishing characteristics, that his love for his late companions did not have its source solely in feelings of gratitude and in the associations naturally springing from a fraternal association in good works, but was also grounded on a similarity of spirit. "The Curés of the diocese of Lyons," he was heard to say, "love them much on account of their kindness and their simplicity. Père Collin, spending a few minutes at La Trappe d'Aiguebelle"—(where we shall before long find the subject of this biography)—"said to me, 'The virtue which, as founder, I recommend most particularly to my spiritual children is simplicity. If you wish to know a person you must be very simple with him;

allow him to speak. It is by being silent yourself that you will get to know him.'"

Four different places were requesting missions for the coming winter, and meanwhile P. Muard, in the early part of November, made a few excursions in the environs of Sens, by way of experiment, in order to test the feeling of the country population. The first regular mission was to be to his native village of Vireaux in December. Writing to his pious correspondent at Avallon, he earnestly requests her prayers and those of her worthy associates for his beloved parish. It was poor in every way, for it had a church without a pastor, and without a presbytery wherein to lodge one, and the people were too poor in this world's goods to provide any remedy for their spiritual indigence. The place was still served from Pacy. "If," he says, "I had not appealed to the piety of the good souls at Avallon in favour of the savages, I should have had recourse to their charity for the Master of savages, the good Jesus, who in the church at Vireaux is as poor as they are, as poor as He was on the day of His Nativity." Vireaux numbered only 400 inhabitants; one missionary, therefore, would have sufficed to give a retreat in so small a parish; but, while he had the greatest desire to commence his labours in his birth-place, P. Muard felt it necessary, in the interest of souls, that he should be accompanied by another priest who was a stranger to these villagers, not to speak of the great advantage of having always two, when this is possible, in order to give more variety and animation to a mission. Here, however, there was an obvious reason for this course. As P. Muard was personally known to the entire population it was naturally feared that a certain number would not wish to go to confession to

him. He thought so himself, but, contrary to all expectation, the fact proved to be quite otherwise. Great, indeed, must have been the respect he had always inspired in those who had known him familiarly from his boyhood, for them, not only to feel no reluctance, but even to press eagerly forward to unburden their consciences to him. This confidence was shared by the very members of his own family, for his younger brother, together with the wife of the latter and other near relatives, chose him as their confessor. P. Muard, indeed, seems to have been a favoured exception to the general rule that "no prophet is accepted in his own country".

On the 10th of December he writes a short letter to Avallon, reporting most successful progress, thanks to the prayers of his dear associates. For details he has no time—at these seasons one is always hurried—but he says they might almost fancy themselves giving one of the Lyons missions, so earnest is the desire which the people evince to attend the exercises and approach the tribunal of penance. The most influential persons, the mayor, and all the members of the municipal council, set the example, which was speedily followed. "All the women," he says, "have already made their confessions, and a considerable portion of the men. Last Easter there were but forty communicants in all, and, among them, only one man. We hope that at Christmas there will not be forty persons who have not communicated. Blessed a thousand times be the Heart of Jesus, who has been pleased to touch and convert these poor people! On Wednesday, the feast of the [Immaculate] Conception, we had the consecration to the Blessed Virgin; the ceremony was magnificent, and everyone was melted to tears." The

change effected at Vireaux excited general admiration, and all the Curés of the neighbourhood were begging for retreats in their parishes. "Pity we are but two!" exclaims the zealous missionary. "Pray the Lord to send labourers into His vineyard."

P. Muard's joy for this harvest of grace in his native village was damped by his solicitude as to its permanence. Some falling off there must always be under the most favourable circumstances when the usual quiet round of religious services succeeds to the stirring exercises of the mission, which, probably, have been effectual in bringing back many sinners and animating the languid devotion of many tepid hearts. Some relapses there will be; not all will persevere, this could scarcely be expected; but at Vireaux the quiet round of religious services was itself wanting. There was no pastor on the spot to shepherd the lately reclaimed wanderer, or to sustain the fervour which had been recently kindled in cold hearts. The Curé of Pacy could only come from time to time and give an eye to this outlying flock, who in the intervals were dependent for their spiritual nourishment on their own faithfulness in frequenting a church some three miles distant. The prospect was depressing, and it weighed on P. Muard's mind. We need hardly say that he had recourse to his one unfailing measure in face of difficulties as well as doubts, prayer; and, after having satisfied himself that his associate, the Abbé Bravard, fully shared his views, he one day made a proposal from the pulpit which must have somewhat astonished his hearers, considering the poverty of the place; namely, to build a presbytery. The two missionaries headed the subscription with a thousand francs, and then P. Muard went from door to door to receive the contributions of

the inhabitants according to each one's means. He also obtained from the commune leave to build upon a piece of waste ground belonging to it, and at present serving only as a receptacle for an enormous heap of stones. The people of Vireaux engaged to remove these stones and to convey the materials necessary for the building, P. Muard on his part promising to defray all the expenses of its erection.

But what would a presbytery avail without a priest? The Father accordingly, as soon as the Christmas festivals were over, repaired to Sens, to beg the Archbishop to send a Curé to Vireaux, and Monseigneur, after raising some difficulties, and alleging in particular the scarcity of priests at his disposal, finally yielded to P. Muard's representations and promised to accede to his request. It may be asked whence did the money proceed which our missionary had pledged himself to supply? In the absence of detail we can, at least, have very little doubt as to the bank upon which he relied. That bank never failed him. The following incident, related by himself, may be taken as proof. "One day," he said, "I found myself short of money, and it was required for the workmen. I set off for Avallon. On the road I addressed our Lord, and asked Him for a hundred francs, the sum which was due, on the condition that it should be offered to me, without my appealing to the charity of any one. But I was resolved not to return without it. On reaching Avallon I went as usual to Mme. Dessignes's, and the next morning said Mass at St. Lazare. I recommended my affair very specially to our Lord. Mass concluded, I returned to the house of that good lady, and she said to me, 'Since you are preparing to leave, I was going to give you fifty francs; but, after all, I can make it a

rounder sum. Here are a hundred francs.'" After thanking her for her generosity he opened his heart to her, telling her how our Lord had inspired her to give him the full sum, without being requested, according to the agreement he had made with Him. He was now able to pay his workmen at Vireaux, who were expecting their wages with a little impatience. The presbytery was fit to receive a resident priest at the close of the year 1842, but it was his successor, the Abbé Chervaux, who completed it. Unfortunately it was at a considerable distance from the church, and, what was worse, the church itself was in such a dilapidated condition that any attempt at repairs would be so much money thrown away. The devoted priest went to consult P. Muard on the subject, but by that time—for we are anticipating events—he had made a vow of poverty, so that nothing that passed into his hands was at his own disposal but belonged to the community, which was burdened with its own building expenses. Consequently P. Muard did not feel that anything could be spared for helping to construct a new church at Vireaux, a matter which caused him much regret.

We will here quote a characteristic passage from a letter of his to this good priest. After telling him that their own house would cost more than he had anticipated, but that he reckoned on the Providence of God to supply the deficiency, he says, "I will, however, impart to you my secret for obtaining the funds I require. It is an absolute reliance on the Divine Goodness. I have no other, and Providence has never failed to furnish me with all I needed, and almost always without my asking any one, for I have no courage and do not know how to beg." He promises neverthe-

less, should the opportunity present itself, to make some requests in his behalf, but warns him that he is not successful at that sort of thing, and has no confidence in it for his own requirements. "It is the good God who does everything, and I reckon on Him alone." The Abbé Chervaux apparently followed his advice, and with good results, for before long a handsome church was rising in close proximity to the clergy-house. It was chiefly built by the offerings of the poor. P. Muard's heart rejoiced, and he promised the Curé full success if he would engage to dedicate a chapel in his future church to the Divine Heart of Jesus. We have by no means fully enumerated all the benefits conferred by our holy missionary on his birth-place, but sufficient has been said to show that, whether directly or indirectly, it owed to him all the priceless spiritual blessings and advantages which it henceforth enjoyed. Well may we exclaim with the Abbé Bonnard, one of the first companions of his apostolate at Pontigny, when he contemplated all that P. Muard had done for Vireaux, "Behold what the virtue of one man is able to effect!" And, in point of fact, despite his poverty or, rather, his complete lack of means,— despite also his lowly origin,—this man did more for the diocese of Sens than was accomplished, or so much as attempted, by any of its richest and noblest inhabitants.

The missions had been hopefully inaugurated, and they continued to be prosecuted with like satisfactory fruit. We find the two Fathers giving a much more important mission, in the Lent of 1842, at Lucy-le-Bois, then a separate deanery, but now united with that of Avallon. The interests of religion were greatly compromised in the place by the dissensions prevailing

and by the prejudices entertained against the new dean. But he who had shown himself an angel of peace at Joux-la-Ville, and moreover was well known at Lucy-le-Bois, proved, in concert with his worthy colleague, equally successful on this occasion in pouring oil on the troubled waters. The instructions of the mission were largely attended, and the church could scarcely contain the numbers who pressed into it. The confessionals were besieged by all classes, and it was observed that even the postillions, who in those days had little time to spare from their fatiguing avocation, would make what profit they could of the opportunity by coming to reconcile their souls with God. The retreat was closed by the planting of a fine commemorative cross, the spontaneous gift of the inhabitants of the parish. The Curés of the neighbouring parishes included in the Deanery were invited to attend the ceremony, and they came in procession, followed by a considerable portion of their flocks, men and women, although one of them, the Curé of Sermizelles, had to bring his devout contingent a distance of six miles. It was a grand spectacle, which left an indelible impression upon those who witnessed it. It seems strange, but the priest who would have seemed to owe the greatest gratitude to the missionaries, the Dean of Lucy-le-Bois, betrayed very different sentiments in their regard. Whether this proceeded from irritation of temper, caused by the hostility he had lately encountered, which prevented him from welcoming a peace thus happily restored, or from jealousy, we cannot tell, and in the absence of further information it would be rash to judge. Anyhow, P. Muard and his colleague looked neither for human praise nor for human gratitude and one is glad to know that in after years

better thoughts had prevailed in the mind of the good priest himself.

After revisiting the different places where he had given retreats or instructions for first communion, P. Muard returned to Sens full of consolation, not, however, to repose himself, but to prepare for fresh work. There was plenty of it in prospect, for, in a letter dated July 15th, he says that already forty-five parishes had sent in requests for missions. But how were these to be given without an accession to their own numbers? True, there were several young priests ardently desirous to join them, but they had no house in which to receive them. Until that object was accomplished, the work of diocesan missions was not yet founded. P. Muard, as may be supposed, often spoke to Monseigneur on the subject, but there was always the same difficulty in the way, want of money,—"that accursed money," as our good missionary calls it in one of his familiar letters, an epithet which, it has been remarked, he never was heard to apply to any other thing or person save only sin and the devil. He had fixed a longing eye on what remained of the ancient abbey of Pontigny. Besides the sanctity of the place, to which so many holy memories clung, several reasons made him covet it for their missionary establishment. The situation was very central as respected the parishes to which they were likely to be called; moreover, it was still a place of pilgrimage, persons coming from time to time to venerate the body of St. Edmund of Canterbury, which has there been reposing uncorrupted for more than five hundred years. This ancient and once famous pilgrimage P. Muard thought might be easily revived to the great benefit of souls, who would find on the spot the Priests of the Mission ready to hear their confessions.

There was also a splendid church, of cathedral-like proportions, which would form an additional attraction to the retreats which they would be able to give there every year. P. Muard visited Pontigny, he examined the abbey-enclosure and the ruins, and this inspection confirmed him in his strong desire to fix the mission-house on that hallowed ground. But was it for sale? This point he was able to ascertain through the Abbé Viault, the Curé of Pontigny and a friend of his own, the same who, as Infirmarian, had taken care of him during his illness at the Grand Séminaire. M. Bernard d'Héry, the proprietor, was, he found, willing to sell the abbey-enclosure, but only on condition that he should at the same time be able to dispose of the lands he possessed in the commune. This, of course, increased the difficulty attending a purchase, but P. Muard resolved to refer the matter to Mgr. de Cosnac, which he proceeded to do, earnestly begging his friends meanwhile to address themselves to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It was His work, and in Him alone did he place his confidence.

Monseigneur, in the first instance, looked favourably on the project, consented on the condition that sub-purchasers should be secured for the outlying property; indeed he went so far as to empower the Father to take the preliminary steps with the proprietor, and to look out for persons willing to buy the lands. P. Muard returned, then, full of hopes to Pontigny, but found the business a most troublesome one; the devil, as he said, grudging them the possession of this holy place, which in their hands might become once more an establishment most serviceable to the faith, threw every possible obstacle in the way. Nevertheless he hoped on, the very difficulties increasing his hopes. "But

our zeal in prayer," he writes, "must redouble; we must use violence with our Lord, we must compel the Heart of Jesus to grant us Pontigny at last. He knows that it is for His greater glory that we desire this house, which for so many centuries was the edification, not of France alone, but of all Europe, and whither bishops and kings came to seek it." He makes bitter complaints, however, of the effect which this sort of work produced on his own soul. "I have spent," he writes from Sens on the 8th of September, "the whole of last month at Pontigny, and I return this evening or to-morrow to hasten on matters. While I am there, do you abide in spirit in the Heart of Jesus, pressing Him to bring this business to a conclusion; for ever since the affair began I know not how I have spent my time. I live like a regular worldling; my mind is full of nothing but temporal concerns; I have no other occupation save that of dotting up figures. With all my heart do I pity those who, by their state in life, are always immersed in secular business, and I can understand the difficulty they find in occupying their thoughts with God and the great interests of eternity."

He met with a most active assistant in the Curé of Pontigny, who spared himself no pains or fatigue, going in quest of sub-purchasers in the neighbourhood and negotiating with them. "As for you," said P. Muard, "you must occupy yourself principally with men, while I occupy myself with God." Nevertheless he had his full share, as we have seen, of the worldly trouble and its accompanying anxieties. It was thus that the bargain was concluded; but how many hours of prayer, how many fasts, how many macerations it cost him will be known only on the day when all that is secret shall be made manifest. Satisfactory pur-

chasers had now been found for all that portion of the property which would not be needed for the mission-house, and P. Muard was hastening back to Sens, his heart full of joy at the prospect of one day inhabiting a place sanctified by having been the abode of so many holy religious and the refuge of two great saints from foreign lands, who, tarrying there, had rendered the name of Pontigny for ever illustrious—St. Thomas of Canterbury, that intrepid defender of the rights of Holy Church and a glorious martyr in her cause, and St. Edmund, Archbishop of the same see, who had left his precious relics to enrich the abbey-church.

He little knew that his worst trial awaited him. On arriving he went at once to see the Archbishop and acquaint him with the success of the negotiations, but he found him in quite another mood. He had made up his mind to have nothing more to do with the plan, to which he had previously agreed under certain conditions which had been fully satisfied. "I am getting old," he said, "and cannot consent to incur debts now when God is preparing to call me to Himself." P. Muard was thunderstruck, and, after vainly remonstrating with the Archbishop and endeavouring to move him from this disastrous resolution, he felt his heart stirred with irresistible emotion, and thus addressed him: "Monseigneur, had we been aware of the mortifying disappointments which we were to meet with on the part of your Grandeur, we should not have returned to the diocese of Sens: we should have remained at Lyons with the Marist Fathers, who wished to keep us. Your Grandeur is not ignorant what sacrifices it has cost us to arrive at the point we have reached. Good was beginning to be effected in your diocese; the missions are well received both by the clergy and by the

faithful; you will be responsible to God, Monseigneur, for all the souls which this house would have saved." After saying this he retired, but his nightly reflections led him to fear that he had gone too far, so that he resolved to return and ask Mgr. de Cosnac's pardon the next day, as soon as he had said his morning's Mass. The Archbishop, apparently, had made his reflections also, for he no sooner perceived his repentant visitor coming than he exclaimed, "Here is my tempter returning! Well, my good M. Muard, you shall not tempt me any longer, for I have resolved to make the purchase of Pontigny. Will you, please, undertake to communicate with the persons who are interested in this sale, and appoint a day when they can all meet at the Presbytery of Pontigny? That done you will apprize me, and I will be there."

It is almost startling to find one who had obtained such complete control over himself that the greatest personal annoyance or displeasure never brought so much as a shade over his countenance, addressing such bold and even angry words to his revered superior. And there is no denying that he *was* angry. A man, however, does not necessarily sin by being angry. Anger, as one of the passions, is a constituent portion of his nature, as God created that nature in its integrity. Guided and governed by right reason, so as not to err either in its object or in its degree, it is not deserving of censure; nay, it will at times be commendable. There is an anger which is just. But should anger, even when just, dominate the will, so as to carry away him whom it possesses to do or say what his reason must condemn, this is always an abuse and a sin. But such was not P. Muard's case. He had spoken advisedly, although he was deeply moved.

Alluding to this occurrence in after years, he said that the purchase of Pontigny was to him and his colleague a matter of life or death, as without it they would not have remained in the diocese. The words, therefore, which he addressed to the Archbishop were not the result of a mere ebullition of anger into which he was betrayed by a bitter and unforeseen disappointment. He said what he meant to say, and meant what he said, and what, moreover, he would have done, had not Mgr. de Cosnac yielded. Although he went the next morning with the purpose of asking his pardon, it is plain that this was only because he feared that he might have been wanting in due respect to his ecclesiastical superior, or, at least, that the forcible language he used might have given that impression, and not because he had any intention of recalling his decision or thought it reprehensible. Mgr. de Cosnac had failed in his promise in a vital matter, and P. Muard plainly considered this failure as releasing him from his engagement to carry out the work of the missions in the diocese of Sens. He had also, it must be allowed, just cause for displeasure in the treatment he had received at the hands of the Archbishop, and no one can blame him for manifesting his feelings on the subject.

It still remains to account for the powerful and, with him, unusual emotion under the influence of which he spoke and acted on this occasion. We will see what he himself had to say on the subject years afterwards. Thrice in his life, he observed, had he felt himself strongly moved. The first time was at Joux-la-Ville, when his authority was resisted with regard to the unbecoming behaviour of certain young people who headed a religious procession, of which an account has been given. The next was in connection with the sale

of Pontigny, as just related. The third was during a mission which he preached at Asnières. An influential man in the neighbourhood was hindering the work of the mission by dissuading the people from attending it and keeping them back from the confessional. One evening, before giving the usual instruction, he felt himself impelled to denounce this gentleman's conduct, saying to his hearers, "You will see, my brethren, that the justice of God will ere long overtake that man to bring him to a reckoning for his unworthy proceedings". When he returned to the presbytery that evening, he said to the Curé, "I really went too far"—we see here the same species of astonishment at himself as in the case of his speech to Mgr. de Cosnac—"but I must confess I was impelled to utter those menacing words. We shall see by and by whether it was the Spirit of God which spoke by my mouth". The wretched man, in fact, came to a miserable end in the course of that same year. When we consider the exceptional character of P. Muard's behaviour in these three circumstances, and the contrast in which it stands to his habitual demeanour—when, in addition, we remember that he does not seem ever to have spoken of it with regret or self-reproach—may we not reasonably suppose that he acted on these trying occasions by the immediate movement of the Holy Ghost, and not from any natural impulse of indignation, however justifiable and virtuous?

P. Muard had now gained his cause. The contract was signed on the 4th of October, and Pontigny henceforth belonged to the diocese. There would be buildings required, but these could be constructed later, and meanwhile he and his associates would lodge themselves as best they might. For him personally the worst was always the best.

CHAPTER X.

Various Missions. Installation at Pontigny.

In the autumn and winter of 1842 P. Muard and the Abbé Bravard undertook their missionary work separately. The first retreat which P. Muard gave was at Island, a parish contiguous to Pontaubert. It was very successful. The zealous missionary had asked three graces of our Lord, and, as a pledge that He would grant them, he besought Him that there might not be more than ten persons in that parish who should fail to fulfil their religious duties during the retreat. His prayer was heard, and, in point of fact, not more than five absented themselves from confession. He had asked, first, for power over souls; secondly, that he might die a martyr; the third petition regarded the diocesan missions, but it had escaped his memory at the time he related these circumstances. From Island he passed on to Sermizelles, which, it will be remembered, belonged to the Deanery of Lucy-le-Bois. Here he remained five weeks, and met with a very able and zealous coadjutor in the Abbé Bonnard, Curé of Givry, who felt himself attracted to join the new missionaries in order to be able to labour more effectually for the salvation of sinners, particularly in country districts. That the return of these wanderers to God during the preaching of retreats must have something in it eminently satisfactory, as regards not only the number usually moved to penitence, but the marked sincerity and contrition which attends these consoling conversions, we may infer from an observation which fell from P. Muard's lips in the presbytery of Sermizelles, where a lady was heard to say to him, "M. le Missionaire,

you are very happy, for you have not much responsibility to make you fear the judgment of God". "Madam," he replied, "permit me to tell you that you are mistaken in speaking thus. As missionary, I have not much anxiety regarding the absolutions I have given and continue to give, but this is not the case respecting those which I gave when I was a Curé, particularly at St. Martin of Avallon. They amounted to, at least, 5,000 annually in that parish, and I cannot think of them without alarm."

This mission which was commenced in December, 1842, was not closed until the Sunday after the feast of Epiphany, when there was a general communion and the planting of a commemorative cross. P. Muard had also the happiness of reconciling a large number of men to God at Blannay, a parish served from Sermizelles, where he preached, while the Abbé Bonnard did the same at Sermizelles. After the mission of Sermizelles-Blannay P. Muard went to St. Germain-des-Champs, a parish composed of hamlets which might number from 1,200 to 1,300 souls. The success of this mission surpassed that of all which had preceded. P. Muard, indeed, declared that he had never witnessed so much enthusiasm. He and the Curé of the place between them heard the confessions of upwards of 1,500 persons, for numbers crowded in from the neighbourhood, some coming from the distance of eight or nine miles, to assist at the evening instructions and make their confessions. The church, in fact, was quite insufficient to contain all who sought entrance. The Curé was much exhausted by his great exertions during the mission; he got a bad cold, which, as he was unable to take proper care of it, fell upon his lungs, and he died a few months later,

apparently of consumption. P. Muard, no doubt, deemed him happy for having sacrificed his life by his labours in so good a cause. He was replaced by the Abbé Cullin, Curé of Sermizelles, for whom P. Muard had the highest regard. He retained a very pleasing remembrance of St. Germain-des-Champs, where he also was never forgotten, his name being held in veneration for years.

In May, 1843, we find him giving a mission in conjunction with the Abbé Bravard, at Ancy-le-Franc, the chief place of the Deanery in which Vireaux is comprised. In a letter written at its close to his friends at Avallon he says, "Our mission at Ancy-le-Franc was difficult, very difficult, during the first week, but the ultimate success surpassed our anticipations. Eight hundred persons, at the least, fulfilled their duties, of whom nearly two hundred were men. A letter from the present Dean, dated June 26, 1882, enables us to add the following reliable particulars. The mission did not take with the people at first, and the men of Ancy-le-Franc—at least a certain number of them—behaved in a very unbecoming manner, collecting at the church-door and making so much noise that the Curé was obliged to mount guard outside to keep them in order. It was the Abbé Bravard, in particular, who was the object of their ill-will, for what reason it does not appear. Possibly it was only as a priest and a missionary that he excited their animosity, which both might have equally shared but for the singular respect in which P. Muard was regarded in that neighbourhood, where he was so well known. He raised his voice to defend and eulogise his persecuted colleague, while the latter was pouring forth his prayers, with tears, at the foot of the altar. When we recollect the

irreligion which was so widely prevalent in France, we have perhaps more reason to be surprised at the favourable way in which the missions were generally welcomed than at this instance of contrary feeling. It is true that a very large proportion of the irreligious population, especially among the rural classes, must have been the prey of indifferentism rather than animated with a positive spirit of animosity against Christianity, but we well know how easily the indifferent and the ignorant can be roused to active hostility even by a mere handful of the malignant and designing; and such men, alas! were by no means thinly scattered in France.

By and by the clamour which had been excited at Ancy-le-Franc subsided: the parishioners became much better disposed, and, finally, were attracted in numbers to the church, so that the retreat, as we have said, ended far more satisfactorily than could possibly have been expected. "I had thought," writes P. Muard to his usual correspondent, "to go to Avallon at the close of our mission, but I was detained to preach retreats for first communions until the Sunday of the Good Shepherd. Then I went to Auxerre to have our church at Pontigny classed amongst historical monuments, so that the necessary repairs may be executed by the Government. On Tuesday next I start for Paris to push forward this business, which interests me in the highest degree. When there, I shall go and pray for you and for myself at the altar of the Archconfraternity of the Blessed Virgin." He then begs that the associates will continue to pray for the success of the missions. Their prayers had been hitherto answered in favour of those parishes which had been evangelized, for they had reckoned up 5,500 persons who had approached the

sacraments during the winter missions, and of these 2,000 were men. "How powerful is prayer!" he exclaims; "and how good is God!" He then adds, with his customary humility, "I hope to make a retreat at Paris; I have great need of it, my poor soul is quite dried up. Pray, then, for me that I may be converted, for I am worse than the sinners for whose salvation we are labouring." And he truly believed what he said.

In the month of July, in this year 1843, he and the Abbé Bravard left Sens to instal themselves definitively at Pontigny, whither a young priest, the Abbé Massé, a vicaire at St. Maurice of Sens, followed them; and the Abbé Bonnard, Curé of Givry, already mentioned, soon also joined them. The ancient abbey of Pontigny was a complete ruin. The church alone had escaped, together with one side of the cloister, the cellar, and a few dependent offices; but all that constituted the monastery proper had fallen beneath the axe of the Revolution, the rage for destruction having caused every vestige of the building to disappear. The priests lodged themselves for the present as they could; the Prior's old house, which they transformed into a species of presbytery, and the orangery, which was still standing, serving them for temporary shelter. As the orangery quarters were the least agreeable and the poorest in every way, P. Muard, of course, hastened to establish himself in them. It was with him an inveterate habit to leave the best for others and choose the worst for his own share. By this means he had the double satisfaction of giving others pleasure and gratifying his own insatiable thirst for humiliation.

The first mission which he undertook after entering on the possession of his new abode was that of

Tharoiseau, in conjunction with the young priest who had lately joined them, the Abbé Massé. It was very successful, and from thence he went to Vermenton, the Abbé Nicole, Dean of that town, having pressed him to come and aid him in preparing the children for their first communion. After giving his attention to them during the day, P. Muard preached in the evening for the benefit of the whole congregation, and the Curé, perceiving that he was much liked, entreated him to continue giving instructions after the children's retreat was finished. He could not refuse, and so what at first he called only an experiment grew into a positive mission. "I thought," he writes, "to remain at Vermenton only till Christmas, and here I am fixed for some time." It was with much reluctance that he had yielded to the Curé's solicitations, thinking that the work was beyond his ability and that, if he undertook it, it might compromise the good already done. He does not state the reason for his diffidence; it was probably owing to his knowledge of the place and its inhabitants, which might seem to him to have needed two missionaries if a regular retreat was to be given. Be this as it may, he undertook the missionary work, which began more hopefully than might have been anticipated. "Minds," he says, "are less ill-disposed than I should have believed; the instructions are not badly attended. They are given on Sundays as well as on Wednesdays and Fridays, followed by Solemn Benediction; and there is talk already, I hear, of confession. May God bless this kind of retreat, but I see that it will be arduous work to reform this parish; we need prodigies of grace to touch such hardened hearts, and consequently we need much prayer. Set yourself to work, then, with a fervour equal to the indifference

of these Vermenton people. We shall accomplish nothing if God does not powerfully aid us. Let us do violence to Him, let us press, let us entreat, let us conjure His Divine Heart to warm these cold hearts and raise these spiritually dead to life. I give you for your share thirty sinners to convert, ten men and twenty women. That is certainly not too much. I give as many to Mlle. d'Assay; I beg you to tell her so from me, presenting her my respects."

He kept a good number for himself, we may be sure, and was not sparing in the price he paid for them. Indeed we know—for he himself has recorded it, although, as often occurs when relating graces received, or answers to prayers, he has written in the third person—that on the 11th of January, 1844, while visiting the Blessed Sacrament, he was seized with a sudden movement to sell himself to God for at least two hundred sinners at Vermenton. His prayers and self-oblation were no doubt accepted, for the conversions were most numerous, and among those who then made their first communion were forty men of advanced age, while his labours in the confessional were so protracted that for three consecutive nights he had scarcely time for even a short amount of sleep. Such labours, however, were sweetened to him by the love of souls. But the devil, enraged at seeing his prey torn from his clutches, found an agent to his purpose for thwarting the good that was being done, in a young man, nineteen or twenty years of age, who from his position and education had much influence in the parish. He was son to the Mayor of Vermenton, and, having one day found the mayoralty seal in his father's private office, the idea occurred to him of making surreptitious use of it for a purpose of his own. Accordingly, he wrote

a pressing invitation to all the youths of his age and thereabouts to assemble on an appointed day and hour in front of the church; every one who possessed a drum being desired to bring it with him. To this circular he had the audacity to sign his father's name, and affix his official seal. The young men were all punctual to the rendezvous, and each came provided for action according to orders. Scarcely, therefore, had P. Muard ascended the pulpit when, at a given signal, a tremendous roll of drums began. The missionary waited until the noise should cease, and then commenced his instruction. But again the drums were beaten furiously, and again he stopped; and, as this proceeding was continually renewed for the space of an hour, he gave the matter up, and descended from the pulpit, without, however, manifesting any sign of irritation or displeasure.

Two or three days after this disgraceful scene, he went to pay the Mayor a visit. He had for several years entertained very friendly relations with this functionary, who was an old officer of the Imperial army, and he seldom passed through Vermenton without going to see him. The Mayor liked him very much for his goodness and winning courtesy. On this occasion P. Muard was more amiable and cordial than ever, and forbore making the slightest allusion to the behaviour of his son, of which the Mayor was probably in happy ignorance. But the young man, when he saw the missionary entering the house, made sure that he had come to lay a complaint against him, and was expecting to receive a well-merited rebuke from his father, whose silence, however, after his visitor's departure, proved that nothing had been said. P. Muard's admirable patience ought to have operated as a far more powerful

reproof, but its only effect was to produce a greater irritation in the heart of the young man, who determined to leave no means untried to put the missionary out of temper. An opportunity for making the attempt soon presented itself. P. Muard went to look at the remains of the ancient abbey of Reigny in that neighbourhood. It was an off-shoot from Pontigny, and is now turned into a farm-house. He had to cross a bridge over the Cure, at which spot six hundred workmen were employed in piling the timber brought down from the Morvand by the waters. "My father," said the young man—for his own account, given in the days of his repentance long afterwards, is the authority for what is here stated—"my father was warden of the port, and had the superintendence of all these workmen. Not being able to go to the port that day, he sent me, as it often occurred, to fill his place. The missionary saluted us courteously as he passed. We did not return his bow, as we ought to have done, but he had scarcely moved on a few steps when I gave the signal to hoot him. Immediately my six hundred men broke out in the most impious blasphemies and the grossest abuse. The neighbouring echoes, I am sure, must have repeated them with deep regret. The Rev. Father Muard remained calm, he did not hasten his pace, he did not look back to mark his displeasure against those who were insulting him with language worthy of hell. After the example of our Lord, he was, no doubt, beseeching God to forgive them for they knew not what they did."

Baffled once more by the heroic forbearance of this man of God, the enraged youth said to himself, "The mission is not yet over; a favourable opportunity may still present itself for tiring out his patience, and provoking

him to some angry demonstration". P. Muard's charity soon furnished the desired occasion. He used to go from time to time to evangelize a hamlet called the Vaux-du-Puits situated some distance from the church. One day, when returning, he met a poor beggar with bare legs and very bad shoes. Moved with compassion, he gave him his own shoes and stockings and returned barefoot along a very muddy road to the presbytery, to reach which he was obliged to go through part of the town. The Dean, seeing him arrive in this plight, gently remonstrated with him, but he guessed the cause, and inwardly admired his charity. Soon it became known throughout Vermenton how P. Muard had stripped himself to clothe this poor man. "Desiring," says his persecutor, "to destroy the good effect which this heroic act might produce on the townspeople, I bade some young men who were worthy associates in my wickedness, go about saying everywhere that it was not true that the missionary gave his shoes and stockings to a poor man, but that he was only a cunning hypocrite, who wanted to pass himself off for a saint, hoping by this means to attract credulous persons to confession." If any conduct could be called diabolical surely the behaviour of this young man deserved to be thus stigmatized, yet we do not find P. Muard denouncing him or so much as naming him; a strong proof that, as in the case mentioned above, he was moved by a direct impulse of the Holy Spirit to act differently.

The last effort of this young agent of Satan was, perhaps, the hardest trial of all to the missionary's heart. He and his bad companions, observing that, in spite of all their opposition, P. Muard's hearers daily increased in numbers and that men and women of all ages were preparing to make their first communion,

while others who had been married only by the civil authorities were about to sanctify their union by the sacrament of matrimony, consulted together how to contrive some plan for counteracting the good work. "The devil," he said, "who is never at a loss for an expedient, inspired me with a thought worthy of himself. He prompted me to organize, for the evening of Tuesday immediately following the close of the mission, a great public ball, to which only young women dressed in white should be admitted. We made sure that a certain number who had received communion on the preceding Sunday would not have the strength to withstand the powerful attraction of a dance. We were not bad prophets, and had the Satanic pleasure of seeing some enter the ball-room wearing the very dress in which two days before they had approached the Holy Table." P. Muard, he adds, had not been ignorant of this impious project, and when he ascended the pulpit on the Sunday, to give his farewell counsels and exhort his hearers to persevere in their good purposes, he was aware that the ball had been announced, together with the conditions of admission; yet he made no allusion to what must have caused him the deepest distress. On the Monday morning he went to take leave of the Mayor, who was glad to see him before quitting Vermenton; but P. Muard uttered not a word to the father of all that his son had done to oppose and thwart him during the mission, or of what he was now doing in the hope of destroying the good work which grace had effected through his ministry. "He was determined," says that son, "to drain to the very dregs the bitter chalice which I had presented to him so often, and was now holding to his lips at the very moment of his departure." Had he before his eyes a

vision of the day of grace which many years later, when he should himself have gone to his reward, was to be vouchsafed to this young miscreant? No doubt P. Muard's earnest prayers helped to obtain for him that miracle of mercy, as the culprit himself was firmly convinced; for when, in order to publish the heroic virtue of the man whom he had so unworthily persecuted, he related the facts which here have been recorded, he added, "I wish it to be known that fifteen years after this vile behaviour I was indebted to him, next to the Blessed Virgin, for the priceless blessing of my conversion".

Nothing would ever have been known of these trials to which P. Muard was subjected at Vermenton, and which so splendidly illustrate his virtues, but for this young man's full and frank avowal years afterwards. He had buried them all in profound and enduring silence; but not so the wonders of grace in which this remarkable mission was fruitful, and which he used to relate to the honour of the *Mater divinæ gratiæ*, into whose hands he committed all his undertakings. He particularly loved to recall the following circumstance, in order to inspire others with an unbounded confidence in Mary. Observing, as we have seen, that sinners held back from confession during the early part of the retreat, he went one day, before giving his instruction, to pray at the altar of the Blessed Virgin, but scarcely had he knelt down when, instead of praying to her, he began to address her with reproaches. He reminded her that she was their mother, and that this parish which loved to honour her on the day of her triumphant entrance into Heaven, which was also the feast of its dedication, was under her special protection. She was bound to recommend its spiritual interests to her dear

Son; and could it possibly be that she would not come to the help of souls who had been confided to her and yet for the most part were being lost? If this were so, what would be said of her power and, above all, what of her goodness? No sooner, however, had he said these words than he regretted having uttered them; his conscience was uneasy, and he felt a need of confession. But the hour for the evening instruction was at hand, so he went at once into the pulpit. He noticed that the church was fuller than usual, but what was his surprise, when, after concluding his discourse, he repaired to his confessional, to find it surrounded by a crowd of men and women! "The Blessed Virgin," he said, "to punish me for the words I had spoken to her before I began the instruction, condemned me to spend three nights and two days in the confessional reconciling the poor sinners whose hearts she had touched."

A severer trial and one much more perplexing to him than any through which he had passed at Vermenton awaited him on his return to the mission-house. A word or two, however, must be previously said concerning the building which was in progress at Pontigny. P. Muard had no sooner established himself with his brethren in the temporary manner described than he began to occupy himself with providing proper accommodation for the present and expected occupants of the ruined monastery. This was an arduous task, not only on account of the slender resources at his disposal, but from the close superintendence which the work required. The Abbé Bravard undertook the office of collecting subscriptions, but on P. Muard devolved the charge of raising the material fabric. He had himself to plan, to measure, to enter into every

detail, and see that all was rightly executed. Nay, not content with supervision and direction, he would encourage the workmen by sharing their toil and labouring energetically with his own hands. When we remember the constant claims of the spiritual order which were daily made upon him, and the active epistolary correspondence which he had to keep up, it is marvellous how he could find time for everything, not to speak of bodily strength. But what is still more marvellous, is the calmness and serenity with which he performed it all and bore the constant and, as we should say, vexatious interruptions which were continually occurring. Never did his countenance betray the slightest impatience on such occasions; nay more, never could a symptom of pre-occupation be observed in his manner, although often inconveniently disturbed and called away from work which demanded his personal attention.

He was entirely at every one's service the moment his aid was needed. He had, as the Abbé Brullée remarks, so accustomed himself to be the slave of the will of God in all the events of life that, if any one said, "Come here," he came; or "Go there," he went; or "Do this," and he did it; and that, too, with truer joy than men generally experience in fulfilling their own will. He may be said to have literally complied with the Gospel injunction to go two miles with him who constrained you to go one;* and, if disturbed a hundred times in the day for the most trifling and insignificant causes, he was never to be seen other than good-humoured and contented. He acknowledged, however, that it had cost him some

* St. Matthew v. 41.

trouble to inure himself to this sort of life, and, even after the victory seemed to have been won, he would occasionally feel himself inwardly moved to impatience when multifold contradictions combined to assail him, but God had given him grace to subdue all these risings before they had manifested themselves externally. At first, also, he used to feel disturbed and distracted, but in the end he arrived at such a high degree of contemplative prayer that nothing whatever could divert him from the presence of God. In a crowd as in solitude, in action as in repose, amid noise and confusion as in silence and quiet, he never lost his sweet and abiding recollection, a state which may be said to be the nearest approach to beatitude on earth, reminding us of the blessedness of our angel-guardians, who, when engaged in their assiduous care of the little ones whom they are appointed to guard, are still ever gazing on the Face of God in Heaven.

Some may be inclined to ask, How did P. Muard attain to a state so exalted and so rare?—a question which is all one with asking the secret of the saints. Why are there so few saints? To which some, again, will think it sufficient reply that all are not called to be saints, or, more correctly speaking, all are not called to the same high degree of sanctity; for, of course, it would be a mistake to suppose—though it might seem as if many comfortably took this for granted—that all are not in their measure called to be perfect. Now, it is just the perfection and completeness of the triumph of grace in this servant of God which we admire; and nothing is more notable in him than the pertinacity and perseverance which marked his co-operation and thus secured that triumph on his part; for God and His grace never fail any one. The secret of the saints,

then, and of the perfect in every degree, is, as perhaps all will allow, perseverance ; and, as perseverance depends on the determination of the will, which makes a man unflinchingly use every prescribed and available means for attaining his end, we are led back to consider its source and refer it to the strength of the original act by which the soul turned and gave itself to God, and to the clearness and fulness with which it recognised its true and eternal Good. If P. Muard's progress to the high perfection he attained was gradual, not such, it would seem, had been this perception and its consequent resolve. It is difficult to say at what age he took the fixed and irrevocable determination of becoming a saint, but that he had done so early is certain. Not merely had he conceived the desire of becoming a saint, but he had understood and assumed it from the first as an obligation, and he continued through life to hear, as it were, the voice of God within him reiterating the obligation. This explains all. It explains how he set his face as a flint to bear everything and to do everything, however repugnant to nature, without a murmur. It explains fasts and mortifications and macerations and vigils and self-sacrifice and abnegation, even to total forgetfulness of self, and silence under injuries, which seemed not so much as to touch him, and thirst for humiliations, as other men thirst for commendations. He was to be a saint. The thing was to be done. God had to be served and loved with an ever-increasing zeal and love, at any cost and at all costs. Surin, that great master of the spiritual life, says, when speaking of determination to perfect good, that many persons imagine that, if what they do is good and laudable, that is enough ; but perfect determination carries a man further, leading

him to do, not only what is good, but what is the will of God in his regard, so that souls in that degree (of determination)—he gives three degrees—study assiduously what it is that God desires of them, and then give themselves unreservedly to perform it.* To this class of the determined P. Muard plainly belonged.

The building at Pontigny must have made considerable progress by the autumn of 1844, for we find him writing to a devout friend of his at Avallon, on the 18th September of that year, promising her and the pilgrims of her party a cordial welcome. After giving some directions about the road, he says, "Do not fear to inconvenience us by arriving rather late; we shall offer you a meagre supper, and place several rooms at your disposal; then, after having passed a quiet night in this spot, where so many saints have made their abode, you will satisfy your devotion on Friday. If you only knew what pleasure your expected coming has given me! I have so long been desiring this pilgrimage, and how grieved I should be if it did not take place! I beg you, or, rather, I entreat you, do not fail to come. It will be quite a fête-day for the whole house, and a special happiness for me. But, I repeat, do not fear being the least in our way; with missionaries, and, permit me to add, with friends, all is done frankly and simply. We know nothing here of the forms of etiquette or of the fashions of the world, but it is with cordiality and simplicity that we receive our friends. So you must consider yourself as at home while at Pontigny; only I forewarn you that we shall make you do penance in the refectory; but the good God and St. Edmund will make it up to you. You

* *Dialogues Spirituelles*, p. 4.

will say, on quitting Pontigny, what Monseigneur the Bishop of Nevers, who has been pleased to honour us with a visit, said this morning when taking leave of us: 'Oh, what happiness I have felt praying near the tomb of St. Edmund!' What I say to you I mean equally for good M. Edmi,* whom I love and respect, as well as for all those who are to take a part in the pious journey."

This extract will serve to show that the building of the mission-house was completed little more than a year after the installation of the Fathers, or, at least, was sufficiently advanced to accommodate pilgrims, who do not expect to be luxuriously lodged. It has been quoted also as exemplifying the friendly cordiality of P. Muard's nature, severe to himself, but ever full of the most affectionate and overflowing kindness even to his secular friends.

CHAPTER XI.

Superior at Pontigny. He receives a Divine Intimation.

The trial which awaited P. Muard on his return to Pontigny after the Vermenton mission was as unexpected as it was distressing to him. Hitherto the utmost unanimity, not only of feeling but of views, had subsisted between him and the Abbé Bravard, the valued associate of all his labours in establishing the diocesan missions. A divergence in opinion on one point now arose which was ultimately to lead to a

* M. Edmond Gagniard, a doctor at Avallon, who ten years later attended his friend on his death-bed.

separation, although it never interfered in the least degree with their mutual sentiments of esteem and friendship. While P. Muard was engaged in evangelizing Vermenton the Abbé Bravard was giving a mission at Ravières, a small bourg in the Deanery of Ancy-le-Franc. A pious woman of middle age, who resided there, had always cherished the desire to consecrate herself to God in the religious life, but had never hitherto seen her way to satisfy her wish. When the missionary came to Ravières, she seized the opportunity of speaking to him on the subject. This communication suggested to the Abbé Bravard the idea of founding a religious community, with the help of this devout lady, to be placed under his own direction, and of which she should be the superioress. He acquainted her with his plan, to which she willingly acceded, and placed herself and her modest means at his disposal.

The Abbé had not the smallest misgiving as to the ready concurrence of P. Muard in this scheme, but he was not long to remain under that pleasing illusion. They met with their usual satisfaction, and had much to tell each other of the success of their respective missions as well as of the difficulties which they had to overcome, but when the Abbé informed P. Muard of the project he had formed and the preliminary step he had taken towards its realization, he soon perceived that it did not approve itself to his colleague's judgment. With that wise intuition which distinguished him, and which we may regard as a special gift of God, P. Muard saw at once that it was not possible to undertake a work like that under existing circumstances. They were as yet only four in number: how could they occupy themselves with the direction of a religious community, which, moreover, was not yet established,

and attend to the diocesan missions, to which they were bound to give the foremost place? Was it not for the sake of these missions that they had renounced their pastoral ministry? "Later," said P. Muard, "we may be able to found a religious community of women, and even a house of education." But this did not satisfy the Abbé Bravard; he clung to his plan; and P. Muard, who was aware of his tenacity of purpose when once his mind was made up, was convinced that he would prefer to quit Pontigny rather than abandon his design. P. Muard, on his side, was equally resolved.

Nothing could have more clearly demonstrated the necessity of a recognised head than did this painful occurrence. No general conformity of views, no friendship, however close, can secure an invariable unanimity of opinion, but, if P. Muard had been the lawful and acknowledged superior, none of the community could have thought of taking an independent line, or of not referring every important matter to his judgment and bowing to his decision when expressed. Hitherto, it is true, not the slightest disagreement had arisen among the missionaries, and all affairs had been treated and resolved upon amicably in common; indeed P. Muard was held in such veneration by them for his eminent virtues that, although none of them were bound by vows, they would have been ready at his bidding to go and preach in any part of France. Such was the testimony given afterwards by one of themselves. Still, the present state of things was such as could not continue without giving rise to serious inconveniences of the kind which had now arisen. P. Muard felt the difficulty of the situation, and the apparent impossibility of arriving at a satisfactory solution on so

delicate a question. What could be done? Destruction seemed to menace the work to which he had devoted all his energies, and there was no obvious means of averting it which could approve itself to his conscience. The good Providence of God, however, had undertaken to supply a remedy, although that remedy itself was at first to be a cause of fresh distress and perplexity to him. Mgr. de Cosnac died at the close of October, 1844, and Mgr. Mellon Jolly, Bishop of Séez, was appointed to succeed him. The new Archbishop had been but a short time installed in his see when he turned his attention to Pontigny, and desired to appoint a superior there with whom he might communicate regarding all that concerned the missions. His choice naturally fell on P. Muard, who, on his part, used every means in his power to refuse the post assigned to him. He implored the Abbé Bravard to accept it in his place. "You know," he said, "that I am not formed for commanding but for obeying; you are aware of my timidity as regards giving advice, or administering reproof if such necessity should occur."

A letter of his to his confidential friend at Avallon gives us an insight into what he endured at this juncture. "I have need," he says, "of more prayers than ever. God has been leading me lately through many trials; He seems to exact a great sacrifice from me. I still flattered myself that I should be able to decline the charge of superior of an establishment; and that for several reasons. First, because I do not recognise in myself any of the qualities essential in a superior; secondly, because, from a certain indolence of temper, I prefer obeying to commanding; and thirdly, because this office appears to place me further off from the goal

of my ambition, I mean my departure for the Foreign Missions. I need not tell you how happy I should be to go to Corea or Japan: and you know why. . . . All these motives made me wish that another should be named superior, but I perceive now that it will be very difficult for me to avoid accepting. These gentlemen at Pontigny insist upon having it so, and it is the Archbishop's will also. You would scarcely believe what I have suffered in this matter. I have felt as if the palm of martyrdom was being snatched from my hand." He then proceeds to tell his friend how he had besought the good God to remove this chalice from him; how he had set all the good Carmelites of Sens praying, and how they had made a novena and offered several communions for him. But, notwithstanding all, he was convinced that he should have to bend his shoulders under this burden, which he dreaded more than anything in the world. He here, it will be observed, betrays the hope which was still laid up in his bosom, of ultimately going to evangelize the heathen and dying a martyr's death. God had not yet revealed to him His designs regarding him, or pointed out to him distinctly the path in which he was virtually to endure his martyrdom, and to win that glorious palm on which his longing eyes had been fixed even from his very boyhood.

The Archbishop, having received no answer from P. Muard, wrote to him a second time on the same subject. When this letter arrived at Pontigny the Father was absent, being engaged in preaching a retreat at Domats. But P. Bonnard was at home, and set off at once for Sens to see the Archbishop and beg him to be urgent with P. Muard to accept the superiority of their little community. "Go to Domats im-

mediately," he replied, "and see P. Muard. It is well that he should know that I adhere to my nomination of him to the superiority of Pontigny." P. Bonnard lost no time in executing his commission. As soon as he had reached Domats he, without preamble, thus addressed P. Muard: "I am not come to beg you to accept the superiority offered you by Monseigneur, but to tell you that the future of Pontigny depends upon you. Do you desire that our little community should exist? Do you wish it to expire? You must say yes or no. If you refuse to accept you will cause the disorganisation of this house, which has been begun by you, and which it has cost you so much trouble and labour to establish. We are quite determined to retire should you decline Monseigneur's offer, and we wish you to know that, if you do not withdraw your refusal, neither shall we change our resolution; and thus the work of diocesan missions will be abandoned." P. Bonnard felt the necessity of speaking thus firmly in order to overcome the repugnance which P. Muard experienced in accepting an office of command. He had succeeded. "Well," replied the Father, "since it is the Archbishop's will, and your will also, to use this compulsion with me I accept. But I am aware that I am about to assume a great responsibility. God is my witness that it is for His glory alone, and for the salvation of souls, that I make this great sacrifice. It is the greatest which He could require of me. I again repeat that I am not fitted to be a superior; I prefer obeying to commanding; but I submit to God's will."

P. Bonnard having thus obtained his consent hastened back to Pontigny with the good news. All rejoiced at this arrangement, the Abbé Bravard not excepted. There was only one person saddened by it, and that

was he who had been promoted to the superiority. Besides his repugnance to a post of this kind he had another reason for wishing to refuse it, and that was his conviction that the Abbé Bravard would leave Pontigny. The Abbé, it is true, was alone in his opinion about the projected community of women; the others agreed with P. Muard in thinking that they were not sufficiently numerous as yet to make any fresh foundation, the diocesan missions occupying their whole time and needing their exclusive attention. Moreover, they objected to establishing a convent of women in such close proximity to themselves, fearing that it might furnish the occasion of censorious remarks. But, although the Abbé Bravard was unsupported by any of the other missionaries in his views, he still adhered to them as steadfastly as ever. P. Muard had therefore the pain of seeing the work which had just been inaugurated threatened with destruction, and that by the very person who had, at the cost of so many sacrifices, laboured with him in laying its foundations. His intentions he knew to be pure and excellent; he desired what was good, but he desired to effect that good in a manner quite foreign to the ideas of those with whom he was associated, and to those of P. Muard in particular. Had, however, the Abbé Bravard been appointed superior—which, as we have seen, he was himself far from desiring—nothing would have been gained for Pontigny, but rather the reverse; as, in the event of his adhering to the intention of founding a community of women there, P. Muard and the others would have removed to some other part of the diocese of Sens. The dreaded separation took place sooner than P. Muard had anticipated. The Abbé Bravard soon after returned to his own diocese, that of Lyons,

and was appointed Curé of Cogny.* If the work of the diocesan missions had been a mere human undertaking, it might have been considered at this time as threatened with complete failure. The defection of so important a member in its very infancy seemed a serious blow, as it would naturally have a very discouraging effect on those who were thinking of joining the community. But no such result ensued, and its numbers were soon increased by the accession of two brothers, the Abbés Bernard, who abandoned their parochial work to join in missionary labours.

P. Muard had no sooner been appointed superior than he diligently occupied himself with the organization of the body which he was called to direct; and, small as it was, he desired that it should have from the first a definite rule and be animated with a spirit which should ensure the convergence of all minds towards one and the same end. He had already at times committed to paper some of his ideas with regard to the rule which he thought would be desirable for their adoption, but he now felt the practical necessity of completing the task. As usual, he fervently implored the light of the Holy Spirit, and had assiduous recourse to the Heart of Jesus and the patronage of Mary. He also gave himself to recollection and much retirement, begging the prayers of devout souls and seeking counsel of his companions in the apostolate. To all this he added the practice of many austerities, which, however, he sedulously concealed from his brethren. The rule which he drew up bears the impress of the pattern which he had ever before his eyes of what the true missionary should be. It was the development of

* This active and excellent priest was subsequently made Bishop of Coutances.

that master-idea of his which was hereafter to find its complete expression in the religious society which he was called to establish.

He commences with a summary exposition of the object and special character of the society. "The end," he says, "which the auxiliary priests of the diocese of Sens set before them is to labour for the glory of God and the salvation of their neighbour by preaching. They constitute a society under the patronage of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary and the invocation of St. Edme (St. Edmund) and of St. Francis Xavier, and are subject to the supreme direction of Mgr. the Archbishop of Sens." Considering as he did that the missionary effects much more by what he himself is than by anything he can say or do, the most powerful engine of conversion being the sanctity of the preacher, he at once directed his aim to this special object, and proceeded to describe what ought to be the leading characteristics of the members. At a period when religion had to deplore so many defections, they must maintain and cultivate a firm attachment to the Holy, Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church and be animated with an absolute devotion to the Sovereign Pontiff, the common father of all Churches, and, under him, to the chief pastor of their diocese. Called as they are to exercise an apostolic ministry, theirs must be an apostolic spirit; they must be distinguished by an all-embracing and unquenchable zeal and by the possession of such acquired virtues as may assimilate them most closely to the likeness of Jesus Christ, their Divine Model. Then, after passing in review those which should be especially conspicuous in their conduct, and dwelling on those which correspond to the vows taken by religious orders, he enlarges particularly on

penance, a virtue which seems to have well-nigh disappeared in our age but which must be deeply rooted in the heart of the auxiliary priest.

Our Blessed Lord, the first of missionaries, preached by His penance and privations, often by His tears, and finally by the out-pouring of His Precious Blood. His holy Precursor seemed to be penance personified; and St. Paul, the most admirable model which, after our Lord, they could set before them for imitation, was a man of penance, who brought his body into subjection and chastised his flesh by rude austerities; indeed all missionaries in all ages have been men of strictly mortified life. "The auxiliary priests, then," he says, "must regard themselves as men consecrated to penance, and must in that spirit accept all the sufferings, hardships, and tribulations attached to their ministry, bearing continually in their bodies the mortification of Jesus Christ. They must do penance for sinners, and, like St. Ambrose, must weep and mortify themselves for those whom they direct. This disposition will attract to them special graces, and particularly that of touching hearts. God cannot resist a missionary who pleads with his tears, and at times even with his blood, for the salvation of souls."

But, although corporal mortification is excellent for subduing the flesh, keeping the senses in check, and maintaining fervour in the soul, interior mortification must be still more sedulously cultivated and must be continual in all things, as St. Ignatius taught. With mortification self-abnegation is closely allied; it must, so to say, form the basis of the apostolic life. He enlarges also on the sweetness and gentleness of their Divine Master, which they must set before them for imitation, particularly in dealing with poor sinners; on

the charity and condescension with which, after His example, they must treat all men; and on the modesty and simplicity which must pervade their whole behaviour and conciliate general affection. They must also copy the admirable prudence of the God-Man, preferring on every occasion what would most conduce to the glory of God and the good of souls. In conclusion, he treats of the exercises of the day, and of fidelity in the performance of them; and here we find him speaking in ardent terms of the love which the priest ought to have for the Adorable Sacrament of the Altar and for the Heart of Jesus so full of tenderness for us, as also of the devotion he must cherish towards the Blessed Virgin, the guardian-angels, and his holy patrons. The remainder had regard to internal regulations and the duties which spring out of the mutual relations of superiors and their subjects.

The rule which P. Muard drew up, and of which we have but noticed the general plan, not only aimed at a very high standard of holiness, but was extremely austere in its character. P. Massé, to whom he showed it, afterwards allowed that when P. Muard read it to him he felt that the kind of life prescribed required such high perfection that a temptation crossed his mind to retire. The Superior's aspirations after sanctity were indeed, he said, of an order surpassing those of the community. Whether he expressed himself to that effect, or whether P. Muard perceived that such were his secret thoughts, we know not, but of one thing we may feel pretty sure, namely, that P. Muard was conscious of an interior attraction to a life of severest mortification, such as he could not fully set before his congregation or embody in his rule, stringent as he had made it. An incidental proof that this was the state

of his mind may be gathered from the ascertained fact that, when the other Fathers happened to be absent, so that he could take his own line unobserved, his daily life was much more rigid than that which they practised in community. It is well to notice these indications, pointing as they do to unsatisfied aspirations and to a sort of inward conviction that God had not yet manifested to him his ultimate vocation.

The work of framing his rule did not absorb his time and attention to the detriment of his missionary undertakings, for during this period he both visited several places where he had already given retreats and laboured in fresh ground. Before he set forth he always besought the blessing of the Lord upon his work at the foot of the altar, recommending it to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, and then began his journey full of undoubting confidence. Upon entering the parish where he was to preach the retreat he used, like that holy man, Henri-Marie Boudon, to salute the angels who protected it and the guardian-angels of its inhabitants. He always went straight to the church, where, after adoring our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, he paid his homage to the Queen of Heaven; nor was the local patron forgotten. His next visit was invariably to the Curé, at whose disposal he placed himself to receive his orders and follow his advice. It was his constant practice, indeed, to honour greatly the pastor of the parish, speaking of him from the pulpit with singular respect and taking care never to seem to put himself forward or take precedence of him in the conduct of the mission, or to undertake any thing foreign to it unless requested so to do. His usual plan in the morning instruction after Mass was to give a familiar exposition of Christian doctrine, chiefly in its

practical bearing and application, but it was in the evening sermon that he mainly addressed himself to those who either did not believe or did not practise what they believed, a class lamentably numerous; and it was on these occasions that all the powers of his mind, all his rich wealth of illustration, and all the burning zeal of his heart were most strikingly displayed. But everything he said and his whole manner of saying it were so instinct with that kindness of which he seemed to possess an inexhaustible well within him, that he never failed to enthral and captivate his audience.

It would be impossible adequately to describe the untiring charity with which P. Muard, during these missions, went in quest of the lost sheep. He spared himself no toil or labour. Fatigue was unnoticed; sacrifices were neither weighed nor counted. But, above all, his prayers were unceasing; and when success did not fully correspond to his expectations he accused himself as the cause and redoubled his austerities, to chastise what he called his tepidity and sinfulness. The Abbé Brullée compares his passionate appeals to God for mercy on sinners to those which a mother might make for the life of an only son lying in the agonies of death. From the foot of the altar, where he had shed floods of tears, he would go to the sanctuary of Mary, then to the image of the Crucified Jesus, and back again to pour forth his soul before the Blessed Sacrament. He would beseech God to strike him, but to spare those poor sinners. "Lord," he would exclaim, "give me this soul, and I will impose on myself such and such an expiation," and, after making this contract with God, he would sometimes sign it with his blood. To all these means for gaining souls P. Muard added

others with the happiest effect. Since the world, he used to say, seduces the senses and imagination by its pomps and shows, is it not allowable for us, in order to save it, to have grand and imposing ceremonies which strike the eye and captivate the imagination of people, thus attracting to the instructions many whom faith as yet would not lead to attend them? Accordingly—always in concert with M. le Curé—he would announce some special services and devotional exercises. The first of these, generally, was the consecration to the Blessed Virgin. The high altar was prepared with all possible magnificence, a picture or image of Mary being placed upon it and surrounded with lights. After a hymn followed a sermon on devotion to our Lady. Then, kneeling in the pulpit, with a lighted candle in his hand, he consecrated the parish to this august and glorious Mother in terms most touching to the hearts of others, because they came directly from the love and fulness of his own.

The blessing of children was another very moving ceremony, furnishing him as it did with the opportunity of giving salutary advice to parents, whom he invited to join with him in the benediction he was about to bestow on these little ones, the dearest treasure they possessed on earth. He had also a solemn *requiem* Mass for the repose of their dead, which drew numbers to the church, for what family could there be which had not to mourn some departed relative? This again gave him the opportunity of an impressive address, in which he exhorted his hearers to charity towards the souls in Purgatory and the making a good and speedy preparation for death. At another time he might be seen, after speaking energetically to his hearers of mortal sin and its dreadful consequences, kneeling

before the Blessed Sacrament with a lighted candle in his hand, and imploring aloud pardon of God for all the outrages He receives from His children of all ages. It has been remarked more than once that love, kindness, and patience were his almost invariable weapons for combating evil, nevertheless he knew how, when occasion called for a display of timely severity, to utter words of holy indignation and speak with a force and even sternness which was all the more effective from its contrast to his habitual gentleness. Thus he would set before his hearers the terrors of God's anger, threatening them with the woes which their impenitence would bring down upon them, and then, lifting up his eyes to heaven, he would supplicate the Divine Mercy for each and all in tones which, rising in intensity, became at length so fervid and pathetic that the whole congregation responded thereto with sobs and tears. He had, besides, a special day of consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, for which, as we know, he had a most tender devotion. On these occasions also he was wonderfully successful in softening the most hardened hearts and drawing tears of compunction from the eyes of those who, perhaps, never before had wept for their sins.

Nothing, however, equalled in grandeur the closing of the mission, in which took place what is called the renewing of the baptismal vows. He knew how to render this always moving ceremony singularly striking. Aware, however, how soon the liveliest impressions will be effaced, if means be not taken to insure their durability, he used to engage the Curés to form confraternities or devout associations which might preserve and keep alive the good results of the mission.

There could be now no doubt of the success of the

missions in the diocese of Sens. In spite of the great difficulties of the times, and the irreligious spirit so widely prevalent, the beginnings had proved most encouraging. P. Muard had, after long and trying delays, obtained permission to devote himself to this great work; and at length he had seen of the fruit of his toils and the travail of his soul. He had also the crowning satisfaction of having been enabled to establish the house of the new congregation in a venerable abbey, rich in holy memories, and under the protection of the relics of a glorious saint. What remained but to prosecute the undertaking to which God had called him and which He had so wonderfully blessed, and continue to reap the fields ready for the harvest and gather the sheaves into the heavenly garner? Was not the heart of the missionary satisfied? In one sense it was fully satisfied. God had led him by the hand, and had hitherto levelled all the obstacles which beset his path. On Divine Providence, then, he securely waited for a further manifestation of Its purpose in his regard, but he was not inwardly satisfied that God had indeed spoken His last word to him; nay, he had some reason to believe the contrary, although the secret remained treasured up in his own bosom, and was never revealed until long afterwards in confidential communication with an associate from whom he had no concealments.

It was while he was still under the pressure of the anxiety caused by his difference with the Abbé Bravard that he received a supernatural intimation which, while it tranquillized his mind, seemed to point to a yet undeveloped future. We cannot do better than quote his own words. "A very important affair called me at this time to St. Florentin, a town situated at no great distance from Pontigny. When I had transacted my

business I went to the church to adore our Lord and to thank Him for its happy success. Having concluded my adoration and thanksgiving I was preparing to leave, but, charmed with the beautiful architecture of the finished portion (of the building), I lingered a moment to contemplate it. Scarcely, however, had I fixed my eyes on this magnificent work, the production of man's intelligence enlightened by faith, when I felt myself suddenly attracted towards the altar of one of the chapels in the church. I knelt down to pray, and immediately I heard a voice which said to me interiorly, 'Be at rest; banish all fear from your heart and all disquiet from your mind. I will make you the father of a great people: *Faciam te in gentem magnam.*' These words which I heard in the church of St. Florentin, precisely at the moment when I was in the greatest uneasiness as to the prospects of Pontigny, remained deeply engraven on my mind, but I never sought to understand them. It is only now"—this was said in after years, when he had received his new mission—"that I begin to comprehend their signification." The effect of this supernatural intimation, the meaning of which he did not as yet fathom, restored peace to his soul, and allayed his fears of seeing his little community dissolved for want of being able to come to an agreement as to the best means of carrying out the good work which they had all equally at heart. The unexplained future he left to God, and more than ever did he cast himself without reserve into His hands, following blindly whithersoever He should lead, while fervently praying for further light on the path before him.

CHAPTER XII.

Vision of a Religious Community.

Besides the strong ascetic attractions which he had experienced from his earliest years, it is clear that there were other motives leading P. Muard to desire to see the practice of mortification and self-denial carried to the highest possible degree in the missionary life. He believed that, if the missionary's preaching was to impress a corrupt and self-indulgent world, he must himself present to it in his own person a pattern of humility, poverty, and penance. In a conversation he had with a friend of his in the autumn of the year 1849, he remarked that the country-people, when priests and their labours were spoken of, were in the habit of saying, "They are working at their trade". Against this prejudice he desired to react by exhibiting examples of religious combating covetousness by the practice of absolute poverty, pride by obedience and the profoundest humility, sensuality by the most rigid mortification. The indifferentism of the day caused even those who were not directly hostile to religion, and who did not look below the surface of things, to be easily seduced into regarding good, hard-working priests as deserving no further commendation than the worthy and hard-working of other professions, who labour partly from temporal motives, partly to obtain that just esteem and praise which society generally accords to those who do their duty in their state of life. The doctor, the lawyer, the soldier, have to make great sacrifices and undergo great fatigues, and the latter in particular must be prepared to risk life itself at his country's call. In accepting these burdens

and facing these perils they only fulfil the necessary obligations of their profession. This was what persons, blind to the supernatural charity which is the spring of action on the part of every good priest, were willing to think and say of them also. P. Muard, therefore, would fain set before their eyes in his religious such exalted living examples of self-abnegation, contempt of the world with all that it could offer, austerity of life combined with the highest forms of active charity towards soul and body, as should force upon men's notice and bring home to their understandings a conviction of the divine source of their mission, and of the truth of the Gospel which they preached.

At the same time he must have been aware almost from the first that his full idea could not be realized at Pontigny; added to which was the fact that the place itself was too much exposed to the inroads of the world without. Visitors were numerous, often persons of consideration who must necessarily receive a good deal of attention, but, no matter who they might be, he was pained by the interruptions which their presence entailed. The grand old church itself was a source of anxiety to him, from the unmistakable signs of decay which it betrayed more and more every year. During winter, or after storms, he might be seen anxiously examining its vaulted arches and endeavouring to have the snow and water removed which had accumulated in places where the roof had visibly sunk. Repairs on an extensive scale would soon, he saw, become imperative if the edifice were to be saved from ruin; but where were the funds to meet so great an expenditure? He trembled when he reflected that he should have to give his mind to the task of procuring them; for such occupation, as the experience of several years had

proved, interfered with his interior life and hindered, as he believed, his union with God. Hence he longed for a place of retirement in some isolated and solitary region, where he could give himself wholly to divine things without distraction.

It will not appear strange, therefore, that he should at times have let fall some observation which subsequently led to the erroneous belief that even then he had it in his mind to select a spot for his future monastery; as, for instance, when, giving an important mission in the Lent of 1844 at Quarré-les-Tombes, where he had the happiness of reconciling many to God, he visited the outlying hamlets of Les Valtats and Les Brizards. They are situated in the Morvand, a solitary region the wild beauties of which had a special charm for P. Muard, and in which he noticed some sites peculiarly adapted, as he thought, for a community desirous of devoting itself to prayer and its own sanctification, far from the world and the world's din, which so easily reaches even monasteries when located in populous centres. Such were his inward cogitations, and then, addressing the priest who accompanied him, he said, "What an admirable situation for a religious house, in the midst of this solitude! What think you, Monsieur le Doyen?" But as yet no divine communication had been made to him on this subject, and no idea could be further from his thoughts than that he should become the founder of anything. He was far too humble and distrustful of himself to have such a desire, his whole ambition, if he could not go and evangelize the poor savages and die a martyr's death, being to live under obedience in monastic seclusion.

It was not till a year later that he was to receive his mission. The month of April, 1845, commenced in

appearance most inauspiciously for the interests of religion in France. A fierce onslaught was being made on the Society of Jesus in the Chamber of Deputies, where a powerful party loudly clamoured for their expulsion from the country. It was at this unpropitious crisis, and while the most nefarious means were being adopted to inflame the passions of the people against that illustrious body, always destined to encounter the first onslaught of the undying hostility with which the enemies of God regard all the religious orders, that it pleased our Lord to commission P. Muard to found a new monastic community. It was the anniversary day of his own baptism, the 25th of April, 1845, the festival of St. Mark and a Friday, when he was returning from Venouze, a village about a mile and a half distant from Pontigny. He had been saying Mass there and leading the procession, when suddenly he had a distinct interior vision of a new religious society, which was shown to him as needed in the present age. He has himself left it on record that when he received this communication his mind was quite in a passive state; he saw and he felt, but neither the discursive reasoning faculty nor the imagination had any part in what took place within him. "Suddenly," he says, "the idea or, rather, the distinct plan presented itself to my mind of a religious society which, devoting itself to the practice and preaching of penance, should for that end embrace a humble, poor, and mortified kind of life, and the members of which should be employed according to their respective capacities, some in prayer and study, others in manual labour, all, however, applying themselves to the observance of the same rule for their own sanctification and the edification of their neighbour.

"This vision which was instantaneous, like a ray of light, made a lively impression on me, and, as I reflected, I recognised how in the present age it was necessary that religious societies should come to the help of the clergy, but that they must be societies such as existed in the days of St. Benedict, St. Bernard, St. Dominic, St. Francis of Assisi, societies whose life should be a continual preaching of all that religion offers as most perfect. I understood that in them expiation must be joined to preaching, and that they must be united with our Lord suffering and dying for men, through self-immolation and by the sword of mortification, being thus made victims for their own iniquities and the iniquities of their brethren in order to appease the justice of God, prodigiously outraged in this our time, and the more surely to obtain the conversion of sinners. I felt that it was needful to oppose to the dominant pride of the age the most profound humility, to the selfishness and insatiable passion for riches, the most absolute poverty, and mortification of the flesh to the self-indulgence of our day, which places sovereign felicity in the satisfaction of the senses; and that men who, coming forth from their desert, like other St. John Baptists, should appear before the world to preach penance, with a humble exterior, bearing the livery of poverty and the stigmata of mortification, must produce effect upon those souls in which all religious sentiment is not extinct, and dispose them to hearken to the word of God and to profit by it. I felt likewise that in this age, which no longer prays, but only knows how to curse and blaspheme, men of prayer were not less necessary than preachers. Like Moses they would raise their hands on the mountain and by the fervour of their supplications draw down the graces of conver-

sion upon sinners, while the missionaries were striving to recall them to God by their instructions. I saw, in fine, that in the actual state of society new religious houses desiring to establish themselves could not reckon on the charity of the faithful, a charity of which the sources are every day drying up, and that they would be compelled to provide for their own maintenance; consequently Lay-Brothers, who by the work of their hands should support the community, would become necessary; and this, besides, would be to save from shipwreck a good number of young men who would be lost in the world for want of an asylum, and who, in exchange for the material aid which they would give to the community, would receive from it spiritual assistance and secure their salvation. And thus that this society, embracing along with the contemplative life the active life in its double sphere of mind and body, would unite in one end the three chief ends of monastic life, and would be open to every religious vocation."

We may here observe that, although St. Benedict's days are mentioned along with those of other saints, there is no indication on record of his having turned his eyes or felt any conscious attraction towards the Benedictine Order in particular. Yet he afterwards told P. Benoit that it was his first thought, and that he believed that it was from God. It was providentially ordained that he should forget it, until it was revived at Subiaco. He had, in fact, as we have seen, two simultaneous and apparently conflicting attractions: one to the penitential and solitary life, the other to the apostolate of preaching. This last, combined with his love for holy poverty, naturally drew him towards the Franciscans, but it was the Order of St. Benedict which was to claim and to adopt him; it was thither that the

leadings of God's Holy Spirit and the arrangements of Divine Providence were conducting him. We shall be called to mark this overruling guidance by and by. It opens a long train of thought, thought full of deepest interest, as to the part the great Benedictine Order may in God's inscrutable purposes be called to play in the conversion and renovation of a world now threatened, by barbarians within its own bosom, with a ruin and destruction worse, it may be, than that which the northern hordes effected in the corrupt and effete empire of old Rome, and in the reparation of which the sons of St. Benedict were mainly instrumental; but more of this hereafter.

This interior vision, as he himself tells us, made an extraordinary impression upon P. Muard. It seemed to him that God was calling him to this kind of life, and requiring him to take steps towards the establishment of the community which had been shown to him. But was it possible, on the other hand, that this was an illusion, a snare of the devil, to hinder him from doing good at Pontigny? Yet the more he reflected the more did he feel how fully such a society would respond to the needs of the time. We have already seen what were his convictions on the subject of mortification, poverty, and self-denial, as exhibited in the lives of missionaries, if their preaching was to move the world, and these convictions were strengthened tenfold by the supernatural communication he had received.

But, while vividly realizing the advantages of such a religious society, several objections arose before his mind, as he thought of the burden laid upon him. They may be summed up briefly under four heads: 1. What would men think of him? 2. His own incapacity and indigence in every point of view. 3. The

probable difficulty of obtaining the Archbishop's consent. 4. How was he to leave Pontigny? These considerations threw him into indescribable perplexity. That 25th of April was, indeed, a day of great distress to P. Muard. "I was," he said, speaking of it later, "in a state bordering on discouragement. The four obstacles which had presented themselves to my mind, when the vision had disappeared, sometimes came all together to assail my understanding. I was like a man who has lost his road amid the shades of night; the more he seeks it the more he wanders from the way. It was with difficulty that I could conform my will to that of God, and I passed a sleepless night, full of fears and alarms. The 'what will people say?' anew confronted me like an insurmountable wall, and then I was seized with terror, above all things, at the thought of my intellectual and spiritual poverty. I got up before daylight, asked Brother Marie to come and serve my Mass, and, having finished my thanksgiving, I took a slight refection, for which I had no appetite, and set off for Avallon. Pontigny is at least 42 miles from Avallon. I made this journey (which I loved much on account of its solitude) on foot, my mind all the time painfully preoccupied. The vision of the previous day was constantly recurring to me; it was always succeeded by the 'what will people say?' They will say that you are a madman, a fool, who are never satisfied; you are indigence itself, you have nothing to qualify you to be the founder of an Order; and then, how are you to obtain permission from Sens to leave Pontigny? What will those young missionaries say who have sacrificed their future by leaving all in order to come and devote themselves along with you to the work of diocesan missions? The journey from Pontigny to Avallon,

which under other circumstances used to be a real pleasure to me, was very painful that day."

He arrived at last, even more fatigued in mind than he was in body, and went straight to the house of Mme. Dessignes, his old parishioner. He was unable to eat a morsel and, after resting for a short time, repaired to the church of St. Martin, which recalled so many precious memories to him. Here he poured out his soul to the Lord, who had ever been so good to him, and who in this very church had touched him in vision with His own Sacred Heart. After remaining awhile in adoration and making a fervent thanksgiving he proceeded to the Presbytery of St. Lazare. Here he had a dear and trusted friend in the Archpriest of Avallon, the Abbé Darcy, whom he was in the habit of calling his Ananias. To him he confided all. "Pray," replied the Abbé, "and do not allow yourself to give way to discouragement. Sooner or later God will make known to you His will." These words, pronounced in that firm tone which faith inspires, restored to him a portion of his habitual confidence, but he was far from being yet freed from his inward disquiet. Taking leave of the Archpriest, he went to see the friend to whom frequent allusion has been made as heading the devout association which he had formed in Avallon, and whose prayers we find him so often earnestly requesting. He spoke to her of his vision, and of his distressed state of mind, begging her and her associates to beseech the Lord to make his way clear to him. She told him that for some time past she had been asking four graces of our Lord. "I will now," she added, "knock at the door of His Heart still more loudly, and solicit Him to grant them as a proof that this is no illusion but a true vision." One of these graces was the conversion of a

friend of hers who for twenty-two years had entirely given up the practice of her religion. Hitherto she had not obtained her request, but very soon after she learned that the object of her solicitude had been reconciled to God and was living a Christian life at Troyes. She also obtained the other three favours which she had earnestly implored as a token of the will of God with regard to this new work. P. Muard, when relating these circumstances, observed, "I certainly thought it was somewhat bold of this person to ask for four graces all at once, but she was heard, and that was enough for me".

Returning to Pontigny, he continued, as before, to attend diligently to the affairs of the community, keeping a profound silence as to what had taken place on his way back from Venouze or as to his own views of leaving them. He did not wish to sadden and discourage his young brethren in the apostolate, and he had such perfect command of himself that he was able to prevent what was passing within from betraying itself by the slightest shade of disturbance on his countenance. But he besought the prayers of all those pious persons whom he met during his missionary excursions. This he could do without explanation or exciting any suspicion. He, too, asked for special graces as a testimony from God that He had verily spoken to him; and, when we find that he made no less than forty requests and obtained them all, we think that he had small cause for taxing his friend with boldness; but perhaps he asked them successively. One was the deliverance of a good religious at Ligny-le-Châtel from the severest interior trials. The suddenness and completeness of her relief was a marvel to herself. P. Muard's own restoration to perfect tran-

quillity was to be more gradual. The first of the four difficulties which, like so many spectres, seemed to arise in the path before him, as if to scare him from pursuing it, was, as has been said, the question, "What will people say?" It took him about a fortnight to "lay that ghost," if we may allow ourselves the expression. At the end of that time his mind was comparatively freed from its assaults. If men should accuse him of folly, inconstancy, and the like, he was content to leave all in God's hands, accepting beforehand every trial of that kind which He might be pleased to send him. The second obstacle, his own incompetency, was harder to deal with. The sense of that incompetency was, indeed, in one way never to leave him, although, as we shall find, it was not to hinder his advance.

When the Lord first required this work of him his feelings may be compared to those of Moses when God commissioned him, from the midst of the burning bush, to go and deliver His people from the bondage of Egypt. His own utter inability was his absorbing thought, and this conviction did not leave him. He was ever representing his poverty, his helplessness, his ignorance. He would say, "Lord, I do not know the A, B, C of the religious life; I have not as yet made the first step on the road of sacrifice; I have not learned how to obey; and I am to be called to command! I am not conversant with either theology or the knowledge indispensable for the religious life." Placing ourselves at his point of view—that is, judging by the high standard he set before him—there was a certain degree of truth in this last assertion. His studies, most diligently begun during his seminary life, had been greatly hindered and interrupted; first, by the administration of two important parishes with outlying hamlets,

which consumed a large proportion of his time, and then, by his constant occupation as missionary, whether in the discharge of the functions which his ministry entailed, or in the business of the purchase of the abbey ruins at Pontigny and the building of the mission-house. Nevertheless, putting aside his abiding conviction of his own personal insufficiency, he endeavoured simply to seek to know the will of God, leaving the rest to Him. For this end he added to fervent prayer mortifications appalling to nature, which seemed, indeed, to surpass its power to endure. True, he had not waited for this vision to become familiarily acquainted with severe disciplines, iron girdles, and the like. Of these he largely made use when he wished to touch the Heart of our Lord in favour of certain sinners who obstinately resisted grace during the missions. To these mortifications he added another of a trying character. He would lie down in his bed for a short time, and then get up before dropping asleep, and arrange some chairs for his couch, using his travelling bag for a pillow. The lying down on the bed previously was a pious stratagem for deceiving the servant of the Curé with whom he might be staying, and making her think that he had occupied it. Sometimes he only tumbled it in order to produce the same impression. This was his way of reposing himself after days of exhausting fatigue, long hours in the confessional, and his own sharp self-inflicted penances.

But these penances were as nothing to what he practised after his vision, for the purpose of learning God's will. One of his own religious related how once he remained alone for five days in the orangery, already mentioned as his habitation until the house which was in course of construction should be

finished, and all this time without eating or drinking. "When I saw him come out," said this religious, "I seemed to behold a dead man issuing from his grave, so pale and haggard was his face. I scarcely recognised our dear father in Jesus Christ, and I could not help asking him if he was ill." "No," he replied, "I am very well." "But," said I, "your face is more like that of a dead than of a living man." It was not till afterwards that he ascertained the cause, namely, the five days' total abstinence from all nourishment. Often the Fathers would imagine that P. Muard was absent from Pontigny, when all the time he was shut up in own room. For this we have his own authority, as he himself mentioned it in after years to one whom he entirely trusted. "In the morning," he said, "Brother Marie, who was in my confidence, served Mass for me. Having finished, and made my thanksgiving, I returned to my room, before the Community had come down to the chapel for their meditation. The Brother brought me some bread and water, and then left me for the remainder of the day. In this manner I used to pass many days and nights, beseeching the Lord with tears and groans to make known His will to me. There was but one thing I desired, and that was to know what He would have me to do. I used to place myself on my knees before Him, telling Him I would not rise until He had hearkened to me. My bed consisted of chairs or of a few planks, and the desk which I had brought from the Seminary served me as a pillow. Worn out with fatigue and penance both bed and pillow seemed very soft to me."

His long vigils and extraordinary mortifications lasted, we are told, nearly two years and a half, until it pleased our Lord to manifest His will more clearly to him.

We have seen what rigid abstinence he practised when he could do so privately. He thought it right to relax somewhat when taking his meals in community, but he early gave up the use of wine both at home and abroad, and managed to persuade persons with whom he was staying that it was good for his health. He made the same excuse to his religious. "See," he would say, "how well I have been ever since I drank only water!" When, owing to the straitened circumstances in which Pontigny found itself after the Revolution of 1848, the whole community resolved to follow the example of their superior, and forego for a certain time the use of wine, he was greatly pleased. Whenever he was absent from Pontigny he always availed himself of any favourable opportunity to keep a constant and severe fast; as, for instance, on the occasion of his going to nurse in sickness the recent Curé of Pontigny, now appointed Curé of Serrigny, thus repaying him for the care he had formerly bestowed on himself at the Seminary. He profited by his stay at the latter place to give a retreat, which had very consoling results; and, after the fatigues of the day, he would spend nearly the whole of the night by the bedside of his suffering friend, taking the brief repose he allowed himself upon a table in the room. The Curé in stating these facts, added that P. Muard kept a strict fast the whole time, his only diet being vegetables and water.

The well-nigh two years and a half * of uncertainty concerning his vocation from which P. Muard suffered were years of menace to the tranquillity of France, for

* This period dates from the communication he received in the year 1844, in the church of St. Florentin, when he heard a voice saying, "*Faciam te in gentem magnam*".

under the deceitful externals of an ever-increasing material prosperity a work of moral decomposition was in rapid progress, undermining the stability of the social fabric and sure to lead to some fearful catastrophe on the first disturbing occasion. Reverence for authority, which is so strong a bulwark to every State where it continues to exist, had in France under the influence of successive revolutions been all but eradicated from men's minds. A licentious press, which daily poured its floods of corruption over the land, teemed with the most virulent and calumnious attacks upon the clergy. Slanderous falsehoods were hawked about in every possible form even in the smallest villages, creating senseless prejudices against the priests and provoking disrespect to their persons. This was especially shown in 1846, when fires, attributed to incendiaries, broke out in all parts of the country. A general panic prevailed, of which the enemies of God and of all good order took advantage to propagate the most absurd imputations against the higher classes, and, in particular, against the clergy. The extravagance of a falsehood is, as we all well know, not the slightest obstacle to its being credited by an ignorant and excited populace. An instance in illustration occurred in Pontigny itself, of which P. Muard was near being the victim; and this was not the only occasion on which his heroic charity at this juncture placed him in peril of his life. A fire having broken out in the village, he hastened with his brethren to the spot to aid in extinguishing the flames, which, however, seemed to have got beyond all control, so that, to avoid their spreading, it was necessary to remove all that was combustible from their neighbourhood. P. Muard, having seized two large bundles of straw which were lying near the burning building, was carrying them

away, when he was met by an inhabitant of an adjoin-commune, who shouted fiercely, "So you want to set some other place on fire, do you?" accompanying the exclamation with so violent a blow of his fist as to make the Father stagger and fall against a contiguous wall. So perverted was public opinion at that period that among the several witnesses of this brutal act not one was moved to indignation or pity. On the contrary, he encountered nothing but insulting jeers and jibes. On recovering himself he got up, shut his eyes, that he might not know his assailant, and proceeded on his way, saying, after his Master's example, "Lord, forgive them, for they know not what they do". On the morrow the Mayor of the village came to thank the missionaries for their exertions, and to express his indignation against the wretched man who had been guilty of the outrage, at the same time begging P. Muard to describe him in order that he might be brought to justice. But how was he to do this, for he had not seen him? Nay, he had even something to say in the miserable man's behalf, pleading in his excuse the exasperated state of the public mind.

This is not the only recorded instance of P. Muard's unwillingness to vindicate his rights. At Joux-la-Ville, for example, he refused to prosecute a man who had stolen his clock. Thus he obeyed to the letter our Lord's injunction: "Of him that taketh away thy goods, ask them not again".* But here it may be objected, if people generally acted in this way how would the world go on? We are not concerned to answer this question. The world goes on badly enough as it is. One thing is certain, namely, the marvellous power over others which is possessed by those who dare to practise

* St. Luke vi. 30.

to the letter the Gospel precepts and counsels. The crowned inheritors by anticipation of the new earth, the meek, even now may be said to exercise dominion over this bad world by despising alike all it can give and all it can take away. The discouraging prospects held out by the corrupt and perverted state of society had no other effect upon P. Muard than to increase his ardent desire to labour for its renovation according to the model that had been shown him, if only he could be certified as to the will of God in this regard. He would then await in peace the moment when the Providence of God should give the signal for action.

CHAPTER XIII.

Retreat at Piffonds.

Day was about to dawn. What we are going to relate rests on P. Muard's own sure testimony. Soon after attending an ecclesiastical retreat at Sens in the summer of 1847, he went to Asnières, and on his way stopped at the house of the Curé of Joux-la-Ville, his old parish. It was a Saturday, and, the Curé having asked him to sing Mass the following day, he consented willingly, for he saw it would please him much, and to please others was always his pleasure. The diocese of Sens was on that Sunday keeping the feast of the Most Pure Heart of Mary. "During the holy Mass," he said, in relating what occurred, "and particularly after the consecration, I felt that our Lord was lifting from off my heart the load which had weighed upon it ever since my vision on the road from Venouze to Pontigny. The doubts which had so much exercised my mind seemed to vanish and give place to light. My mind and heart were both of them relieved."

As soon as his Mass and thanksgiving were concluded, after taking some slight refection, he set out for Asnières, which is full 18 miles from Joux-la-Ville. The way led along bad cross-roads, which were hilly besides, yet so great was his inward joy that he scarcely noticed either the ruggedness of the road or its length. A good brother, now departed, Frère Jacques Gourdon, used to relate how much struck he was by the Father's radiant countenance when he arrived at nightfall at the presbytery, where this young man happened to be. For two years past he had observed that it had worn a certain expression of care, for, though, as we have seen, he exercised much self-control, and more particularly at Pontigny was careful not to betray his inward perturbation, yet this prolonged and wearing anxiety could not fail to imprint traces on the outward man. Surprised at this change, Gourdon ventured to question him as to the cause; and, as this pious youth was in the confidence of P. Muard's projects, the Father did not hesitate to acquaint him with the consolation which had been imparted to him that morning when saying Mass.

It will interest the reader to know something of young Gourdon's antecedents. His conversion dated from the Christmas of 1844, when P. Muard went to see M. Voisinat, the Curé of Asnières, a friend of his childhood. Here he took occasion to give a short mission. Asnières was in a most miserable condition at that time. An inhabitant of the place, rendering his testimony in after years to the wonders worked by P. Muard among the people, said that he did not remember in his boyhood having ever seen any communicants save those who were making their first communion. P. Muard, after giving some instructions

previous to the feast, announced on the 26th a three days' mission, and solemnly placed both it and the parish under the protection of the Blessed Virgin. That very evening, at 11 o'clock, there came a loud ring at the presbytery door and a summons to P. Muard to come quickly, as there was a crowd of youths waiting for him in the church ; and, in fact, he found twenty assembled there, all desirous to make their confession. At their head was young Gourdon, the prime leader of all the dances and gaieties in the place. He was the first to enter the confessional, made a complete change of life, and became subsequently a religious at the Pierre-qui-Vire, where he died the death of a saint. His old father followed him, to die there also, and his sister became a nun of the Congregation of Providence. The 27th and 28th saw a large addition of young penitents at Asnières, and on the 29th, the closing day, there were at least three hundred communicants, of whom a hundred were men, out of a population of seven hundred.

To return from this short digression to the day of P. Muard's arrival at Asnières three years later. It was a very happy meeting. P. Muard had regained all his pristine gaiety. They talked of the old days, and he took pleasure in reminding M. le Curé's aged mother of the time when he was beginning to learn Latin at Pacy-sur-Armaçon with the Abbé Rolley, of all her kindness to him, and the sweetmeats she used to give him. Nothing was forgotten ; the heart's memory never failed him. From Asnières he went to Avallon, to see the Archpriest and make him a partaker of his joy. He also spoke to the devout person, so often mentioned, who was at the head of his association for prayer. "I too," adds the recorder of these details, "had the hap-

piness of seeing him at the Archpriest's house. He was calm ; his fine countenance expanded with joy. I was struck, as I looked at him, with the saintly air which pervaded his whole person. Far was I from suspecting that day that he was working for me, mortifying himself for me. If any one had said to me, 'In five months he will come and seek you at the Grand Séminaire of Sens, as the priest who is to accompany him to Rome, afterwards to return and, in concert with him, lay the first foundation of the work which has cost him so many prayers and so many mortifications,' my surprise would indeed have been great ; and yet this was what was to take place." From Avallon P. Muard went to Pontigny, where he made but a short stay, for a few days later we find him giving a retreat at St. Colombe-les-Sens to the nuns of the newly installed community there. The chaplain to these religious was the Abbé Brullée, his intimate friend and future biographer, to whom he had confided all his secret projects and inward trials. They agreed together to go into retreat at Piffonds, when they had concluded their present work. As this retreat was decisive in its results, we must enter into some details concerning it.

On the 13th of October the two priests arrived at Piffonds and took up their abode in the presbytery, which the Curé, the Abbé Rémond, a man of much piety and mortification, had kindly placed at their disposal. The building itself and its situation were in perfect harmony with P. Muard's spiritual predilections, not to say his natural tastes. It would have been difficult, observes the Abbé Brullée, "to find a more solitary Thebaid". Here stood the ruins of an old castle of the middle ages, now converted into a presbytery. It had still its towers and its drawbridge. On

one side it overlooked a garden, through which there was access to the church, on the other, a spacious court-yard, from which shady paths led far away into the silent depths of a forest. P. Muard on arriving hastened to select for himself the least commodious room; no remonstrance ever availed to deter him from this practice, which agreed so well with both his charity and his humility. His immediate object in making this retreat was to know perfectly the will of God concerning the vocation to which he felt all but irresistibly drawn; but he also desired to try his own strength by observing while at Piffonds a very rigorous regimen. "Do you," he said to his companion, "live as you are accustomed to do, and allow me to practise abstinence such as I believe it will behove me to observe, should God confirm me in the projects with which He has inspired me. We will keep strict silence except for an hour at mid-day, when we will go and converse—only, however, of divine things—in the umbrageous paths of these lonely woods. In the evening we will visit our host, who is our friend as well as our *confrère*, and, while conversing, we will string a few rosary decades for the sake of having a little manual labour."

P. Muard wrote a very particular diary of this retreat; from it we learn the precise order which he observed each day. From three o'clock in the morning to five he meditated and prayed; he then went to awake his companion; after which he wrote, read, or reflected until eight o'clock; at that hour he began his second meditation, which, with his preparation for Mass, brought him to ten o'clock, when he offered the Holy Sacrifice. At half-past eleven followed spiritual reading and examination of conscience, the discipline, and then the Psalm *Miserere*, repeated while lying prostrate

on the ground. Dinner was at mid-day, according to the *régime* he had prescribed to himself, that is, bread, water, and vegetables cooked with salt. The walk followed. At two o'clock came vespers and rosary; then he said matins, followed by prayer, renewed austerities, and the recital of the seven penitential Psalms. While his friend was partaking of his ordinary collation he contented himself with a piece of bread and a glass of water; once only he consented to accept a few grapes, with which he afterwards reproached himself as a weakness. After recreation and a little manual work—it was then, no doubt, that he and his friend visited their sick host—the day closed with some pious reading; after which, and having finished his evening devotions, he extended himself on a plank for the few hours which he accorded to sleep.

He punctually followed this plan, during the fourteen days of his retreat, which was divided, according to St. Ignatius's method, into three parts. The first was dedicated to the examination of conscience and the excitement of lively sentiments of contrition in his soul, in order that, thus humbled and purified, he might approach the sacrament of penance and become more fitted for the reception of divine communications. The second comprehended what he regarded as the most precious portion of these holy exercises. It was to be employed in the examination of his vocation, by seriously weighing and deeply reflecting upon all that could serve to enlighten him as to the will of God in this regard; and striving to place himself in a state of perfect indifference to everything but the accomplishment of that holy will. The third portion was designed to fortify him in his good resolutions by uniting him as intimately as possible to God, in order to carry out the

species of life which He was calling him to embrace. He set himself to this work with heroic ardour, and every evening he wrote a memorandum of his thoughts and sentiments and of the manner in which he had acquitted himself of the day's exercise. Did we not know from recorded examples that the saints invariably regarded themselves as the greatest of sinners, it would be matter of surprise to us to read, where he gives an account of his meditation on sin, what was this holy man's opinion of himself. And that it was genuine no one can doubt. The lines which record it were written for his own eye alone and for that of God—written, as it were, in His very presence. Speaking in the third person, as was his wont, he says, "He comprehends the enormous malice of sin, and his own inconceivable malice in having offended a God who has loved him so much and loaded him with such special favours; he understands how there has never been in the world a being more abominable, more monstrous, more prodigiously criminal than himself. With the hundredth part of the graces which he has himself received, the worst villain would have become a great saint; and after such numerous, strong, and pressing graces he is only an abyss of sins. O my God, what is to become of him? He feels that he must embrace the holy rigours of penance. Why should he fear to immolate his heart by repentance, his soul by suffering, and his body by mortification? After so many sins which have merited hell for him, he will be too happy if by dint of tears, groans, sorrows, and austerities he may at last merit to be pardoned for his countless iniquities." And again, "Alas! ever since he has been in the world he has done nothing for God; he has lost thirty-seven years in respect to eternity. If he had employed them well,

what treasures would he not have amassed for heaven!" And not only, he says, have these years procured him nothing for heaven, but they have been preparing treasures of wrath for hell. How many at thirty-seven years of age were saints, great saints, and as yet he is only a sinner, and the greatest of sinners!

When we read passages like these, written with the most evident sincerity by one who, so far as we can judge, was probably never guilty of a single grave sin, we are led naturally to marvel how such a one, imperfect as he might judge himself to be, could really believe that he had committed a larger amount of sin than any miscreant on the face of the earth; but this is perhaps not the way to put it. It is certainly impossible to conceive that he thought he had actually committed a larger amount of sins, formally speaking, than the most wicked of his fellow-creatures, but he considered that the guilt of his sins and shortcomings, viewed in the light of the extraordinary graces he had received, rendered him more culpable than the worst among them. Not to respond to such a call as he had received was, he thought, to insure his own damnation. Accordingly, we find him saying further on that he sees that there is no middle course for him; the untold favours which he has received necessarily require that he should be a saint, otherwise he will be plunged into the lowest depths of hell. He clearly perceives that he needs a very decided order of life; otherwise he will do nothing but vegetate, oscillating continually between good sentiments and tepidity; and that he must definitively embrace a poor, humble, and mortified life if he would escape eternal damnation. The result of this conviction is that he views the realization of the project in question as for him a kind of necessity; he resolves,

therefore, to devote his every effort to it, trampling courageously on human respect and looking only to the glory and will of God, his own salvation, and that of his brethren. He thinks that this society will need the poverty and humility of St. Francis of Assisi, the spirit of penance and mortification of St. Bernard, the zeal of St. Ignatius, the charity of St. Vincent de Paul, the spirit of St. Benedict and of St. Bruno.

It is remarkable what a prominent position the Franciscans always seemed to occupy in his thoughts. We shall have occasion to notice this once and again, and yet, as has been seen, it was his first impression after his vision on the road from Venouze that the rule of St. Benedict was to form the basis of that of his future community. No doubt the poverty and humility of the Friar Minors constituted their great attraction in his eyes, and, as yet, he may have been but vaguely cognisant of the austere life followed by the Benedictines of the primitive observance, who are not only faithful representatives of the spirit of their holy Founder, but who carry out in these modern times, as closely as altered circumstances permit, the literal prescription of his rule. There was nothing in Père Muard, even to his passionate love of the wild solitudes of nature, with their woods, rocks, caves, and gushing streams, which did not mark him out as a true son of St. Benedict. He was to recognise this one day, though, as yet, he seemed ignorant of it, Divine Providence probably ordering things thus that Its leadings might be all the more distinctly visible. But to return to the Piffonds retreat. Although his path was not at present made clear to him, P. Muard was prepared to follow the will of God wherever it should lead him, and was convinced that it would conduct him to a life which by its austerity

should hinder him from relapsing into tepidity and sin, and by its separation from the world would destroy his propensity to distraction and dissipation of mind. We have seen how on account of its temptations in this respect he shrank from all secular business, albeit undertaken for a pious object.

Several questions now exercised his mind. Was he to enter a religious house, if, indeed, he could find any which combined in the degree desired by him penance with preaching? This he would have been well disposed to do. Or must he commence leading this life alone, or with one or two companions, waiting until others should join them? Somehow this latter alternative seemed the most to attract him. Penance was needed for this century of ours, and, even if no one should join him, he felt none the less drawn to follow such a life, and, in fact, all the more because he would be freed from the solicitude attending the establishment of a house. Occasionally, however, sadness would assail him at the idea that he was undertaking a work the difficulties of which he would be unable to overcome, and that thus he would be made the laughing-stock of the world; but these thoughts speedily passed away, and he regained his tranquillity. It was soon, however, about to be fearfully tried. As yet he was looking forward calmly to the moment when he should have to make his *election*,* meanwhile engaging himself to fight under his Lord's banner, and be at His entire disposal in all things, ready and joyful to shed his blood for Him.

* When the Exercises are made with a view to the choosing of a state of life, or for some other definite object, such as the choice of means for arriving at the degree of perfection to which God is calling us, the day of *election* is, in one way, the most important during the retreat.

On the evening of the fifth day we find him lighting on a passage in the Life of St. Peter of Alcantara which showed him in the Reform of the Order of St. Francis, which this saint brought about, a kind of life very similar to that which he contemplated. What happiness if he could discover such, all ready-made to his hand! The attraction to the Franciscan Order again exhibits itself here or, rather, his attraction to the poverty and humility embraced and practised by its Seraphic Founder, virtues which he also so intensely loved. We find this love manifested in a marked manner during his meditations on the Birth and Childhood of our Lord. Holy poverty, he says, shall be his cherished companion, she shall accompany him everywhere; it is to her that he will commit the care of providing for him what is needful; he chooses her for his governess, his mistress. Again, after meditating upon the Two Standards under which all men march, and on which he figured to himself as respectively engraved, Ambition, Riches, Pleasures, and Humility, Poverty, Mortification, we find him confessing that he had still to learn what true humility was, so profound was the conception he formed of it. "I feel, O my God," he writes, "that I have never had a true love of annihilation, a genuine pleasure in abjection as the state natural and becoming to me. Do Thou make me interiorly support, seek, cherish, taste, and relish shame and suffering, and all of which my wretched nature has a horror."

It was during the third meditation of the eighth day, and while he was reading of the manner in which an election should be made, that he began to enter into an indescribable state of spiritual darkness and interior desolation. It will be best to quote his own words,

in which he gives an account of the ordeal through which he passed. "The day of election was come. I had done what depended on myself to reduce all the faculties of my soul, according to St. Ignatius's recommendation, into calmness and tranquillity. I placed myself in a state of perfect indifference, desiring one thing only, to know the will of God, in order to follow it, and when once known, to abandon myself entirely into His hands, desiring only what He desired. In this state I sought our Lord, and prayed with all the fervour of which I was capable, but the more I prayed the thicker became the darkness in my mind; I arrived even at being unable to see anything; I found myself deprived of the faintest light, such as would be absolutely necessary for any spiritual discernment. My heart was disturbed, agitated; to the profoundest peace had succeeded a frightful tempest; my will seemed to falter in the midst of all the trials which assaulted me. I no longer knew what to do, or what would become of me. We had already reached the evening of this day, so important in a retreat. I felt scarcely able to say my office. I could eat nothing. I was like a vessel tossed about by a terrible storm. I went and came, I wished to cast anchor in order to protect myself against this tempest, which had upset everything in me. I went to the church; I tried to address our Lord, but I could not pray. I conjured Him to have pity on me, a poor wretch, who in spite of all and everything still desired to be His servant. He is deaf to my voice, the more I cry to Him the deeper is His silence. The storm continues. No longer able to pray on account of this great desolation, I went and knocked at the door of the Tabernacle. I implored our Lord to have compassion on me. I said to Him, my heart broken with sorrow,

No, I will not leave this altar or this church before Thou hast granted my prayer'. I prostrated myself on the altar-step, and remained there whole hours, resembling the beast of burden of whom the Prophet speaks rather than a man.*

"Night was drawing to its close, the day beginning to dawn, and I was still there in the same attitude, waiting for a word from our Lord. But, as that word came not, I rose and left the church; I could scarcely walk, so bowed down was I with grief. I reached the presbytery, and went to seek my Ananias.† He tried to comfort me, by speaking words of consolation. These words, which came from a heart that loved me, only served to increase my sufferings, and my heart felt still more the pressure of its cruel anguish. After this brief interview I went mechanically into the library, and took up the first book which came to hand. It was a volume containing the Life of St. Teresa. I opened it on chance, and lighted on the passage where she speaks of what she suffered on the occasion of one of her foundations. The words of the saint struck me. I continued to read, and the darkness which shrouded my mind began by degrees to be dispelled, and tranquillity to return to my heart. I felt my will regaining its strength. I closed the book and went back to the church. I began to pray. I heard a voice; it was the

* Psalm lxxii. 23.

† P. Muard's Ananias was, as we have seen, the Archpriest of Avallon, but this is the only time he is mentioned in connection with this retreat. We conclude either that he was there as director to the two priests who were both going through the Exercises, or that P. Muard here uses the appellation in a general sense, as we find him doing when calling the director of some other person his Ananias.

voice of our Lord. At that instant I felt within myself something which gave me to understand that it was the will of God that I should occupy myself with this work. Our Lord spoke to me, and said, 'Yes, I desire that you should found this little congregation'. 'But, Lord, Thou knowest how poor I am, and that in no respect am I fit to be the head of a community.' 'I know that,' our Lord replied. 'I have already told you that it is on account of this very poverty that I have fixed My eyes upon you; it is well that you should know that this is why I love your soul among all on earth with a surpassing predilection. Be at peace, you will not be alone, you may reckon upon Me.'"

Thus ended this terrible trial, which lasted a day and a night. "It was the greatest," P. Muard added, "of all that I have had to endure during the whole course of my life. It was to me my Gethsemani. I had to drink the chalice to the very dregs. I had, however, but one desire, to know the will of God. From that moment my doubts vanished, and, after the truths of faith, I had no stronger conviction than that God willed me to found this little society. This point, then, I felt was decided; the work which our Lord required must be performed; there was only now the question of time. Such was the conviction that I carried away from Piffonds when I left it to return to Pontigny." This is the account given by P. Muard to the friend and brother from whom he concealed nothing. It is fuller than that which we find in his diary. He there simply informs us that he was interiorly reassured by our Lord, and the rest, but does not give the words in which that assurance was conveyed. He had now a double ground for confidence. The first was that which sprang from his own reason-

able persuasion of the great advantages of the work in question and of his own call to carry it out, all which he had impartially examined with the eye of faith, tested by those rules for the discernment of spirits with which he was well acquainted, and made the subject of fervent prayer. The second was that still more deep conviction which God, who gave to man an intellectual soul, knows how to communicate directly to his spirit in a manner beyond and superior to reason.*

We find him accordingly registering in his diary a solemn engagement to devote himself to this work. "Intimately convinced," he writes, "of the immense advantages of this work, I purpose now to take the resolution of giving myself entirely to it, not relying at all upon myself, who am but a sinner, a nothing, but solely on the grace of my all-amiable and all-adorable Master, our Lord Jesus Christ. This day, Friday, the 23rd of October, I, Jean-Baptiste Muard, unworthy priest, most humbly prostrate in presence of the court of heaven, before the throne of the Most Holy and Most Adorable Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, moved by the reasons I have stated, devote myself with my whole soul to execute the project with which the good God has inspired me; which is to lead a life, humble, poor, and mortified, alone, if the good God should give me no one to share it with me; and, if He sends me companions, I engage to found a little religious

* See Life of St. Teresa, Chap. XXV., on Divine locutions and delusions on that subject, where she clearly explains the difference between them and their counterfeits, whether proceeding from Satan, or as fashioned by the human understanding, and gives several safe tests for discriminating between them.

society, which shall follow the rule of St. Francis of Assisi, or any other which may seem to accord with the kind of life which we wish to lead. This society shall practise absolute poverty, austere penance, and deep humility; its object will be to labour for the glory of God, the edification of our neighbour, and our own sanctification, by means of prayer, penance, and preaching. From this very day I place myself wholly at the disposal of the good God, to commence this mode of life when He pleases, as He pleases, and in the manner that He shall inspire me; after having, however, consulted the directors of my conscience, who are cognisant of all these things. I supplicate very humbly my Divine Master to assist me now by a very powerful grace, and to give me the virtues necessary for this work, and specially a profound humility, a great spirit of penance, and an ardent love of God. . . . I deposit this in the Heart of my all-adorable and most sweet Jesus, and in the Immaculate Heart of Mary; I place it under the patronage of St. John the Baptist and St. Francis of Assisi."

After committing to paper this dedication of himself, he said Mass with great sensible devotion and made his election. Then, at the moment of Communion, after receiving the Body of our Lord, he made the engagement which he had previously written down, and our Lord, as he said, seemed to accept and ratify it, speak- to his heart and promising to be with him in all the difficulties which he should have to encounter, granting him grace to triumph over them. His heart was inundated with joy, and, after having thus given himself irrevocably to God, he received the Precious Blood as the seal of this donation. P. Muard's manner of offering the Adorable Sacrifice was always most

edifying, but on this occasion he who had the privilege of serving it, and who had therefore a near view of him, attested that he had never witnessed anything more enravishing. He seemed to behold a seraph offering Mass in the heavenly places. After making this solemn and definitive engagement P. Muard proceeded to fortify himself in the virtues which he would be called upon to practise in the highest degree in his new mode of life by meditating upon the obedience, humility, poverty, and abnegation exhibited in the Passion of his Divine Model. When he arrived at abnegation he had such a forcible view of the necessity of dying utterly to oneself in all things that he could not help inwardly saying, *Durus est hic sermo*, and the devil took occasion to afflict him with dryness and to tempt him to believe that he was incapable of attaining to this perfection. He knew, however, that this was but a temptation, and he endured it for the love of God. Soon the light shone again in his soul.

The novena which he and his companion had been making in honour of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary and to obtain the graces they sought during this retreat, closed on the tenth day, when the evening meditation was on the Resurrection. "Our Lord," he writes, "communicated Himself to my poor soul, in the sweetest and tenderest manner. He said to me things which I scarcely like to set down on paper, with such confusion do they cover me. He told me that He would make of me a vessel of election. I reminded Him of my miserable imperfections and my countless sins. He, a second time, repeated, that He would make of me a vessel of election, and that He would furnish me for this with strength, zeal, and the love of humiliations. 'Reflect,' He added, 'on the graces I

have bestowed upon you, and see if there have been many more favoured than you have been.' 'But, Lord,' I said, 'I have so much abused them.' 'True,' He rejoined, 'but My love for you is not exhausted. If you did but comprehend the millionth part of My love for you, you would love me with the ardour of the seraphim.' I then asked our Lord for the gift of prayer, the love of penance, and fervent charity; and I added that, if all He had said to me was real, I begged Him to grant me the grace to perform all my actions with intense fervour, union with God, and purity of intention. I understood that He consented, and He then recommended me devotion to His Sacred Heart, bidding me make my habitual abode therein, and promising also to abide in me."

The remaining four days of the retreat were accomplished by P. Muard in great peace of mind, the last two being devoted to drawing up a rule of life together with the exercises which were to enable him to fulfil his engagements, and supply him with the means of persevering in them. The virtue which he meant to apply himself to obtain during that year was penance, and with this object, besides the practice of interior mortification which, as St. Ignatius teaches, must be both universal and continual, he proposed to exercise himself in the practice of corporal mortification, which is the support of that which is interior as well as the guardian of fervour in all the other virtues. The resolutions which he adopted for this end were very rigorous. They included rising at three o'clock in the morning, except on the days following a long journey on foot, or when, during missions, he had been kept up to a late hour engaged in the duties of his ministry; sleeping on a plank or, when excessive cold should oblige him to

occupy a bed, using only a palliasse or slipping a plank inside; no breakfast at any time, unless he had a journey to make in the early part of the day; the most severe abstention as regarded diet, both in quantity and quality, retrenching about a fourth of what he could willingly have eaten; the deprivation of a fire in winter, except when the cold might be so great as to interfere with his power of occupying himself; the use of the discipline thrice during the week and of a cincture garnished with iron points three other days, but only from morning till midday; with other slighter austerities at pleasure daily, and the recitation every evening of the Seven Penitential Psalms, his arms extended in the form of a cross. To these resolutions he added a strict guard over the senses, particularly the eyes and the tongue, keeping the former habitually cast down, in order the better to preserve recollection, the presence of God, and never allowing himself to speak ill of his neighbour, or to censure his conduct, unless he had legitimate reasons for doing so. He would also invariably abstain from raillery or any word unbecoming gravity.

Gladly would P. Muard have prolonged his retreat to a full month, but the call of duty summoned him back to Pontigny. He left Piffonds, his soul filled to overflowing with spiritual joy, but many a time did he turn to take a parting and regretful look at the old manor house, the church, and the forest, a picture dear to his imagination, but dearer still to his heart as the scene of his sorrows and his joys, his conflicts and his victory, the memory of which remained for ever imprinted on his mind.

CHAPTER XIV.

His First Associates.

The object of P. Muard's retreat had been fully attained. Hesitation was no longer possible after the words which our Lord had addressed to him in the church of Piffonds. He had, moreover, a further supernatural communication after his return to Pontigny. It took place on three consecutive days, the 11th, 12th, and 13th of December of that same year, at the Memento for the dead, when he was saying Mass in the chapel of the community, as he himself related. "These are the terms," he said, "in which our Lord spoke to me: 'I will that you should found this little congregation. If you found it, heaven will be your portion; if you do not found it, you will go to hell.' Heaven or hell, then: there was no middle course for me. Our Lord also acquainted me with the rule of life which He desired to establish in this infant congregation."

There is something truly appalling in these words of our Lord. They seem to throw a vivid light upon the risk incurred by resistance to a divine vocation. In P. Muard's case, indeed, his call bore such strong marks of being supernatural that, had he not employed, as we have seen him doing, every available means to assure himself of its veracity, there might be great reason to fear that he would have incurred a serious risk of being ultimately abandoned by the grace which he had thus despised and rejected. But, supposing he had received no supernatural communication, and had only experienced strong interior attractions of an abiding character, well tested and tried, and accompanied by other reasonable proofs that these drawings came from the Spirit of

God, and yet had turned away from them through disinclination or want of courage to undertake a life of so much perfection and self-renouncement—what of his guilt then? Can a person be said to sin grievously and forfeit God's grace because he refuses to follow a counsel of perfection? A counsel is not a precept, neither is an offer a command. But this is scarcely the light in which we should regard these slighted vocations. If it be really true that God, out of His special electing love, is calling a soul to some high vocation, can it be a light matter to decline such an offer, and thus, by implication, undervalue a love so marvellous and wound the Heart of its Divine Lover? Moreover, it may be that He who knows whereof we are made sees the soul's urgent need of those strong and peculiar graces which could alone be obtained along the path which His predilection had traced for it. St. Teresa, somewhere in her works, when speaking of the immense loss incurred by resisting a call to perfection, adds that there may be cases where even the salvation of the soul is bound up with its correspondence to this call. It is a deeply mysterious subject, as are all subjects connected with the Divine purposes and decrees. Speculatively we shall never fathom them, but practically we have sufficient light to guide us; for if, on the one hand, it is presumptuous to run before grace and undertake that for which we have no vocation, and perilous, on the other hand, to hold back when God calls us, nevertheless the faithful soul, sincerely desirous to ascertain His will, need never fear that it will be left in uncertainty or ignorance of its true course.

P. Muard knew this well, and, placing himself unreservedly in his Lord's hands, was not disappointed of his hope He never again, as we have said, wavered in

his conviction, and he held himself ready prepared to carry out the injunction laid upon him as soon as Providence should furnish him with the means of doing so. Not knowing how soon God might call him to his new field of labour, he strove diligently to complete what he had begun at Pontigny. He finished the building which he had undertaken and, in particular, the little interior chapel, in which the Roman liturgy was followed several years before its re-establishment throughout the diocese. He decorated this chapel with two beautiful windows of painted glass in the style of the twelfth century. He also gave a last touch to his rule; and now his mission at Pontigny was concluded, and he was ready to depart, but he had still to obtain the consent of the Archbishop, and had also—and this was not the least painful trial which awaited him during that year of trials—to announce to his community the distressing tidings that he must leave them. Moreover, we must not conclude that from the time of his retreat at Piffonds he enjoyed uninterrupted freedom from interior trials. The devil, who dreaded and hated the project, was certain to stir up combats in his soul, as often and so far as he was permitted. For two months, indeed, the servant of God was free from all disturbance, but this happy state did not continue, and we find him in the early part of the year 1847 complaining, in a confidential letter to a friend, of his dryness and desolation; all the good sentiments of his retreat seemed to have disappeared, leaving only a distressing memory which added to his sufferings. More than ever did he long to be completely separated from the world and its distractions, and more than ever did he feel the necessity for such a separation. He experienced an extreme difficulty in setting himself to work at his

usual occupations, and groaned over what he reproached himself with as shameful inertness. Meanwhile the obstacles to the execution of his project would present themselves to his mind in increased and fearful numbers. "I have sometimes," he said, "strange temptations. I feel urged to run away from everything and take refuge in a desert, there to do penance and look to my soul's salvation in safety, or to go and shut myself up at La Trappe."

But, although he did not yield to this desire, which he recognised, as we see, to be a temptation, he was able some months later, after the termination of the retreats, to repair to La Trappe-de-Septfonds, where he spent seventeen days in the exercise of prayer and penance, and renewed the abandonment of himself into the hands of God. If his body was extenuated by the fastings and mortifications to which he there subjected himself, his soul was greatly fortified to encounter all the remaining difficulties which beset his path, and peace once more reigned within.

Before, however, proceeding further we must relate how Divine Providence furnished him with the two companions who were to accompany him on his new adventure. P. Muard did not wish to go forth alone, and had always desired to have a priest and a lay-brother with him; it is almost superfluous to add that what he desired he had also made the subject of prayer. His first acquisition was the lay-brother, and it will be interesting to learn from P. Muard's own lips how he found and secured him. "I was at the ecclesiastical retreat at Sens," he said, "in the month of August, 1847, when the Abbé Calmeau, Curé of Nuits-sous-Bavières, came to see me in the room I occupied. At the close of our interview I asked him if he was satisfied

with his parish. He replied that there was much still to be desired in a religious point of view. 'However,' he added, 'I have a young man, a recent convert; he is a wheelwright by trade, the eldest of three brothers; the father is dead. In spite of his business this young man would not be indisposed to leave the world and become a religious.' Scarcely had he uttered the word 'religious' when the thought came into my mind, He will be my first Brother. When the retreat at Sens was concluded, I went back to Pontigny, and the very next day I turned my steps to Nuits-sous-Bavières, to make the acquaintance of this young man. Arriving that evening at the Curé's house I said to him, 'Could I not see for a minute the young man you mentioned to me lately at Sens?' 'Nothing easier,' he replied. 'His day's work is done, I will send for him, and he will gladly come to have some talk with you. He needs encouragement in his good resolutions, for his business obliges him to mix with the world, particularly as he is at the head of his father's workshop.'

"The young man required no pressing to come and spend the evening at M. le Curé's with me. I received him quite naturally, and by degrees the conversation turned on the religious life. I asked him whether he did not wish some day to join a community with the view of becoming a religious. Being by nature hesitating and unable to decide promptly he left us without having made any reply to my question. Soon after, we prepared to retire to rest, but I began by passing a portion of the night in prayer. I begged our Lord to enlighten him, and grant him the grace to follow his vocation. The next morning, when saying Mass, I recommended him in a special manner to our Lord. Having finished my thanksgiving I returned to the

presbytery, breakfasted, and about nine o'clock set out on my way back to Pontigny. Our Lord inspired me suddenly with a happy thought, which I hastened to communicate to M. le Curé. I said to him, 'Do we pass before this young man's house?' 'Yes,' he replied; 'we are just about to pass it. It is the last house on the right; his workshop is beneath the house and opens on to the street.' 'Well,' I said, 'when we get close to the shop we will walk slowly by.' So we at once slackened our pace. He spied us immediately, quitted his work, and came to meet us. 'I am disposed,' he said, 'to leave at once if you are willing to have me at Pontigny.' 'Yes,' I replied, 'I will allow you to come, but you must remain for another week at home, to set your affairs in order. Your two brothers are younger than you are; you will put them in the way of all that concerns your business, that they may not be embarrassed afterwards.'"

His temporal affairs being arranged and all settled with his brothers, the young man confided his good mother to them, they on their part promising to take care of her and keep her with them. He then set out for Pontigny, where he remained as a simple Brother for ten months, before accompanying P. Muard into Italy. This was how Maurice Lalevée was called to the religious life. He assumed at first the name of Brother Francis of Assisi, but afterwards changed it for that of a Benedictine patron, St. Maurus. The brother was now secured, but the priest was yet to seek. He was found in the person of the Abbé Préau, to whom we are indebted for the account we have just been giving; and it is from him that we also learn the particulars of his own vocation. We shall draw largely from his simple narrative, exhibiting, as it clearly does,

the finger of God in the whole transaction. Divine Providence was to lead P. Muard (as he says) to find his first priest at a moment when he was least thinking of it. Several pious priests, friends of his, whom he had acquainted with his design, had told him that he might reckon upon them as soon as he made a beginning. "We shall be yours," they had said; yet not one of these joined him either to begin his work or to prosecute it. "Three weeks before his death," says P. Benoit—we give him by anticipation the name he afterwards bore—"on the day when Mgr. de Dijon visited the Pierre-qui-Vire, he said to me, standing in the entrance court, as he saw Brother Vincent de Paul pass, 'My elect have remained in the world; it is our Lord's elect who are here with me'."

Early in February of the year 1848 important business called P. Muard to Troyes, and from thence he went to Sens to treat with the Secretary-General, the Abbé Sicardy, about the Pontigny affairs, their house being, as we have seen, under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop. The Abbé, observing that P. Muard was lame, insisted on his giving himself a couple of days' rest at Sens. A stone, in fact, had fallen on his foot two months previously, and the wound was not yet healed. "Certainly," said the Abbé, "you shall not leave to-morrow; besides, I shall want you in order to settle the affairs of Pontigny." P. Muard represented that he was expected at Lézinnes on the evening of the following day, Saturday, having engaged to aid in a mission which one of the Fathers was giving in that place, and had to deliver an instruction on the Sunday. The Abbé Sicardy, however, was peremptory as to his remaining at the Grand Séminaire until the Monday, when he would be allowed to go whither he

pleased. P. Muard, who loved obedience, accordingly submitted, and consented to stay; indeed, he was fain to acknowledge that it was only prudent for him to do so, as otherwise he might be laid up for many days.

One of his former pupils at Joux-la-Ville, the Abbé Breton, came to pay him a visit on the Saturday evening, after supper. "As he was leaving," says P. Benoit, "he passed close to me in the Hall of Conferences, where I was by myself, walking up and down. 'P. Muard is here,' he said, 'and if you wish to see him you can do so to-morrow, for he tells me he is going to spend the whole day at Sens.' 'To-morrow morning,' I replied, 'I will go and see him as soon as breakfast is over.' I was very anxious to have a conversation with him, for I purposed consulting him about my religious vocation."

This young seminarist had been ordained deacon at the close of the previous year, and had afterwards placed himself in communication with Mgr. Bonami, Superior of the Congregation of Picpus, with a view to his admission as novice into that society. He had been virtually accepted, subject to the condition of his providing for his own maintenance during the period of his noviciate. This he was not so circumstanced at present as to be able to undertake; and, besides, he must have the consent of the Archbishop of Sens. M. Laurent, the Superior of the Grand Séminaire, had, however, promised to take the necessary steps for obtaining the sanction of his diocesan. On the Sunday morning he went to see P. Muard before eight o'clock. He found him, in compliance with the Abbé Sicardy's injunctions, still in bed, but he was talking to the Abbés Breton and Beau, both of whom had been in some sort pupils of his at Joux-la-Ville. They with-

drew on his arrival, but were scarcely gone when the bell rang for a conference of canon law. "There is a bell summoning you," said P. Muard; "besides, I am about to get up and go to offer the Holy Mass. Come back in the course of the day to see me."

P. Muard told P. Benoit afterwards, when they were in Italy together, that on his part he was very desirous to speak to him; and for this reason, he added: "You had scarcely entered my room when I said to myself, 'Here is my first priest, though he does not suspect it'." Not only was this perfectly true, but as yet the young deacon was quite unacquainted with P. Muard's design of founding a religious congregation. After dinner P. Muard told him he had an engagement which would prevent his seeing him then, but he was to be sure to come to him after Vespers. Punctual to the appointed time he hastened to P. Muard's room, and knocked at the door, but received no answer. Being, however, very desirous to consult him, he would not go away, but remained in the corridor awaiting his coming, and, as he owned, with a certain degree of impatience. Presently he saw him mounting the staircase, but he was accompanied by the Abbé Sicardy, who had a register under his arm. "Do not go away," said P. Muard as they passed him; "I shall be at your service very shortly." An hour nevertheless elapsed, and still the Secretary with his big book did not emerge. It was now five o'clock, and the bell rang for a conference. As he left the corridor to attend it he said to himself, "I doubt whether I shall be able to have a moment's conversation with P. Muard about my religious vocation". There was enough, indeed, to have discouraged any one less strongly moved than he was to seek a conversation which, although he

knew it not, was to be so decisive in regard to his future life.

After supper he asked permission of one of the Directors to go and see P. Muard, who was expecting him. Leave was granted with evident reluctance. After a moment's hesitation, "Go," the Director said, "but do not stay long". He lost not a moment in going up to P. Muard's room, and this time he was to be successful in finding him alone, and as desirous for the interview as he was himself. "He made me sit down by him," says the narrator, "and I spoke to him of my wish to quit the Grand Séminaire, and of not feeling any vocation for the pastoral ministry. 'I have written,' I said, 'to Mgr. Bonami, the Superior of Picpus, begging him to admit me into the noviciate of his congregation. Here are two letters which I have lately received from him.' P. Muard took but did not read them, and began speaking to me in these terms:—'In the days in which we are living we stand in need of men of good will who would have the courage to lead a life of penance, for society is very sick; it is devoured by the triple concupiscence; pride, sensuality, and cupidity are carried to their utmost excess. Ordinary means no longer suffice to arrest it on that fatal incline which is conducting it to inevitable ruin. I intend to make an experiment; indeed, for the last three years I have commenced this new kind of life. I have left off wine, and at Pontigny I rarely eat any meat. I content myself with vegetables, and am all the better for it, as you may see by my face. Having made this trial, I propose to found a little community; but we shall have to pass first through a noviciate.' 'In order to found a community,' I observed, 'you are, no doubt, aware that you will have to face many obstacles. You

know that the Religious Orders have been persecuted for some years past.' 'I know that,' answered P. Muard, 'but be at rest; the present state of things will not last long.' It was on the 6th of February, 1848, that he held this language to me, and it was on the 24th of the same month that Louis Phillipe was dethroned and took in dishonour the road of exile. While he was speaking to me in this prophetic tone I seemed in imagination to behold a number of religious walking singly in a wood, with their eyes cast down and as if absorbed in deep recollection. 'I cannot be free,' continued P. Muard, 'before the month of September. You will be ordained priest on the feast of the Blessed Trinity. After your ordination you will come and join me at Pontigny; but I do not mean to remain in that house for my experiment of this new kind of life. At every moment of the day I should be liable to be disturbed by persons wanting to see me. Probably we shall go to Italy, the classic land of Religious Orders. But two great difficulties have first to be overcome. I have already triumphed over two: the what will people say? and the sense of my own incapacity. I hope to have surmounted the other two before that time. I need the sanction of the Archbishop of Sens, and, in the next place, I shall have to separate myself from Pontigny. How am I to manage these two things? Meanwhile unite your prayers with mine, and I love to believe that our Lord will hear us at the desired moment.'

"Throughout this interview, which lasted an hour, he never said to me, 'I reckon upon you,' nor did I, on my part, tell him that he might reckon upon me; but from the first he expressed himself thus: 'We will do this or that; we shall go to such a place and not elsewhere to begin this new life'. It was nine o'clock in

the evening when I left him to retire to rest. Before I went he made me promise to observe the most profound secrecy respecting all that he had told me. 'You may be quite easy,' I replied; 'I will not speak of it to any one, not even to my director.' The next morning I went to the Superior to beg him not to say anything to Mgr. de Sens about my purpose of leaving the Grand Séminaire and entering the noviciate at Picpus. 'Yesterday evening,' I told him, 'I saw P. Muard, and we have made arrangements together.' 'I regret much,' replied the Superior, 'not having heard this sooner. It would have prevented me from taking the step I did yesterday evening about five o'clock, of requesting Monseigneur's permission for you to go to Picpus. Anyhow this was his answer. He allows you to leave the diocese, but not before vacation time. One of the pupils has just entered St. Lazare, and he fears lest two departures, so close upon each other, might cause some derangement in the seminary.' This change, which God had willed, produced a very disagreeable impression on the Superior. He did not show it to me, but soon afterwards I went to see my director, whom he had acquainted with the step I had taken, and he manifested his discontent to me in pretty severe terms. He told me that I was unstable, and had sunk much in their estimation since my new resolution. Having promised P. Muard to keep his secret I was silent, and willingly accepted the censure passed upon me."

All, however, was to end satisfactorily. In the course of Lent P. Muard, desirous to ascertain whether the Revolution of February 24th had in any degree shaken the young deacon's resolution, saw him again for a few minutes at Sens, and found him in the same

disposition as when they had parted. He begged him to continue praying that the two remaining obstacles might be surmounted, so that they might be free to begin the work. In the meantime he was to prepare himself well for his ordination to the priesthood. After that they might be able to arrange what he should do previous to their departure. Not wishing, however, to take anything upon himself, the narrator proceeds to inform us that on Easter Monday he went to see the Archbishop, and told him how on the very day when the Superior of the Grand Séminaire made that request on his behalf he had a conversation with P. Muard, who was willing to receive him at Pontigny. "I will nevertheless," he added, "do whatever your Grandeur may bid me." "Go to Pontigny," he replied, "and do not leave the diocese. You will come to an understanding about everything with P. Muard." He bade him take care, however, to request the Superior not to enter his name on the list of young priests which would be presented to him with a view to their appointment, as by this means all disagreeables would be avoided. The feast of Holy Trinity came, and the chosen companion of P. Muard's labours was ordained priest. On the very next day he once more sought the Archbishop to receive his directions. "Go to Pontigny," he repeated, "and place yourself at the disposal of P. Muard. If you require faculties, he will obtain them for you."

"Behold in a few words," writes P. Benoit, in after years, "the exact account of all that took place between P. Muard and myself, with reference to my vocation. Nothing had been premeditated. Our Lord, as He ever does, had made use of second causes, but He it was from whom they arose, so that, as we

have seen, it is difficult to recognise anything human in them. No hesitation either on his side or on mine: 'We will do so and so, we shall begin at such a time, we shall go to such a place'. From that moment the slightest doubt never came to ruffle my mind."

In this whole transaction P. Muard comes before us as the true servant of God, following step by step the leadings of grace but never running before it, a thing of which, like St. Vincent de Paul, whose spirit he in many points reflects, he had a great dread.* Thus there was never anything prepared or premeditated in his acts or words. The external leadings of God's Providence, combined with the inward light which he received, marked out to him unmistakably the course he was to take and the words he was to say when the moment came. The same guiding Providence, we may well believe, brought to him his first two associates, whom a special conjunction of circumstances seemed to throw in his way but who, as we see from what P. Benoit has told us, were always reckoned by him, together with his other early disciples, to be "the elect of God". Speaking of these first associates, we must not omit to notice the vocation of the Abbé Moreau, although

* A whole catena of passages might be extracted from St. Vincent de Paul's letters to prove the similarity of their sentiments on this and kindred points. To quote a few would very inadequately illustrate the marked resemblance in this grace which P. Muard seems to have received to that which gave its peculiar character to the views and acts of this great saint. It must be sufficient to refer the reader to the *Lettres de St. Vincent de Paul*, published in 1882, which are well worth perusal were it only as furnishing a kind of unconscious portrait such as letters alone can supply; letters, at least, written with the simplicity and frankness with which alone it would have been possible for a St. Vincent to express himself.

he was not to be the companion of his journey to Italy. He was the future Père Bernard, and the successor of P. Muard in the superiorship of his foundation at the Pierre-qui-Vire. At the period of which we are speaking the Abbé Moreau was Curé of St. Aubin at Châteauneuf, in the Deanery of Aillant-sur-Tholon, but he was on the point of giving up his charge to go to St. Lazare at Paris. His admission had been decided upon, so that it was only a question of time. The Archbishop of Sens had begged him to wait awhile, until he could provide a substitute for him in that important parish. Another cause of delay arose from the fact that the Abbé, who was an only son, had his father and mother with him at present until their house at Poilly-sur-Serein should be ready for them. When attending the ecclesiastical retreat of 1848, he went to see P. Muard for the purpose of speaking to him of his resolution to quit the pastoral ministry with a view of joining the Lazarists. P. Muard confided to him his own project, which he was about to put in execution, but told him that the rule which he proposed to follow would be very rigid, adding a few words respecting it. This new kind of life was attractive to the Abbé Moreau, who, without the least hesitation, replied, "You may reckon upon me. I will be one of yours. It is difficult for me to say precisely when, for that depends on Mgr. de Sens and on my parents."

"This is the way," says P. Benoit, "in which our pious Founder met with his first three vocations for the new kind of life he was embracing, and this without any previous design on his part. Truly all was Providential." What is most remarkable is that though he found each of his future associates at a moment when

he had nothing less in his mind, yet he no sooner saw them than by a kind of inspiration he knew them to be his. Precisely the same thing took place in this as in former instances. He said to the Abbé Moreau, "you will one day belong to us"; and all came to pass as he had predicted. "Whoever," observes P. Benoit, "shall have the mission some day to write a complete Life of our pious Founder will do well to portray him as a docile instrument in the hands of God, never neglecting the least circumstance which presented itself, as it were, spontaneously, but never seeking to create it. There was nothing therefore of human policy in his conduct, to render natural what was really not so. This is the secret of his success in all that he did; this is why his works exist, and shall continue to exist, so far as the works of man can do so."

CHAPTER XV.

Journey to Ars.

Two obstacles still remained for P. Muard to overcome. Unlike the first two, they were external and did not depend upon himself. He had trodden under foot the thought of what people would say, and had set aside all reflections on his own poverty and incapacity, but he had still to obtain the consent of the Archbishop of Sens and that of the Fathers at Pontigny. After much prayer and penance he had taken a preliminary step towards preparing Monseigneur and feeling his way. He had told him that there was a priest in the diocese of Sens who had long felt urged to undertake a work which seemed calculated to promote the glory

of God and the sanctification of souls. He now unfolded his plan, explaining the principles on which it was based, and pointing out its advantages. The Archbishop listened with interest, and said that he would willingly consent, if this priest did not occupy a post where his presence was necessary. This was but a half success. There still remained the question whether Monseigneur would not consider the position he occupied as too important to admit of his resignation.

The removal of the second obstacle was meanwhile the object of his fervent prayers and sacrifices. He finally came to the resolution of speaking to each of the Fathers separately in the course of their annual retreat at the end of July. The newly ordained priest whom P. Muard had chosen as his associate arrived at Pontigny on the evening of the 19th June. His unexpected appearance surprised the Fathers, who enquired what was the purpose of his coming. P. Muard replied that he was sent there by the Archbishop of Sens. This did not satisfy the good Fathers, and one of them ventured to suggest that the Superior had not a preponderant voice in the case of an election, so that it would be best to call them together in council to decide respecting his admission. P. Muard simply answered, "This is not necessary, for he has not come to remain with us; he is here only for a passing visit. Later you will know why; at this moment it is needless to tell you." The visitor, in fact, left Pontigny on the 21st to go and see his family, but returned for two or three days at the close of the July retreat. It was during the religious exercises that P. Muard, as he had purposed, consulted all the Fathers, one by one, on the subject of his future mission. He related to them what had passed in connection with the call he had

received, and laid before them all the reasons which concurred to constrain him to follow it. With the exception of one of their number, who as yet had not the same clear insight, all agreed in recognising that it was the will of God that he should undertake this new work, notwithstanding the deep regret they felt at the loss which it would entail on themselves. We must not suppose, however, that no remonstrance was offered: far from it, they only acquiesced in the reasons given by their superior. To P. Massé's entreaties that he would, at least, postpone his departure, he replied, "I am forty years old; I cannot wait any longer". The behaviour of his spiritual sons at this trying juncture was very consolatory to him; nevertheless, to the last moment before his departure, he was in constant dread of an appeal being made to the Archbishop for the purpose of detaining him at Pontigny, while allowing him to carry out the new mode of life which he was desirous of leading.

His next step was to request the Archbishop's definitive consent, which he had resolved to do during the same ecclesiastical retreat of August, 1848, when, as we have seen by anticipation, he had the interview, just mentioned, with the Abbé Moreau. He prayed and asked for prayers before seeking this decisive audience with Monseigneur, and finally selected a Friday, the day on which many favours had been granted him by our Lord. After offering the Adorable Sacrifice for this intention, he went to see the Archbishop, and, having reminded him how upon a previous occasion he had told him that there was a priest in his diocese who desired to make essay of a new species of life dedicated to penance, and of the answer he had made, now confessed that this priest was himself. He also informed

him that the Fathers at Pontigny did not wish to receive the young priest whom the Archbishop had sent to them, but that, in fact, the young man had not gone to them with the view of becoming a diocesan missionary, his desire being to join him (P. Muard) in his proposed undertaking. "Well, my friend," replied the Archbishop, "follow your vocation," repeating the words with marked emphasis: "yes, follow your vocation." They fell very sweetly on P. Muard's ears, who, after asking Monseigneur's blessing retired, his heart full of joy, but by no means as yet free from all anxiety, since he knew that the slightest remonstrance on the part of the Fathers of Pontigny, who had left all to follow him, would, in all probability, cause the Archbishop to recall his permission.

But we have not yet enumerated all the causes of anxiety which combined to render the last few months of his stay at Pontigny a time of peculiar trial. His mind was naturally much occupied as to his successor, and he earnestly besought our Lord to provide one after His own heart, to carry on the work at Pontigny which he had been chosen to begin. Now it so happened, at the time when P. Muard was praying to know the will of God concerning his own future, that a young priest, remarkable alike for his virtues and talents, had confided to him his desire to leave his parish and come to Pontigny, to place himself under his direction. This was the Abbé Boyer, Curé of Pourrain. Upon this gifted priest, with whose merits he had been well acquainted when they were together at the Grand Séminaire, P. Muard fixed his eye as one who would be eminently fitted to succeed him in the post of superior. All had been arranged meanwhile concerning his reception at Pontigny, when, just at the

time that he expected him, P. Muard received a letter from him saying that he had changed his mind, and had resolved to remain in his parish. This unexpected news was a severe disappointment to the Father. At once he sought our Lord, and told Him that if He did not give him this young priest to replace him as superior he should not be able to carry out His work. He then went straight to Pourrain, where he now found the Abbé Boyer in a state of indecision. He begged for six weeks' delay before giving a conclusive answer, to which P. Muard readily acceded, being persuaded that our Lord would not deny his request.

His confidence was rewarded by seeing the Abbé Boyer arrive at the end of the six weeks to join the community. "I had asked for him," he says, "as a token of my Lord's will," and so he told the Abbé Boyer himself when the latter subsequently reproached him for forsaking his children after having induced him to abandon his parish that he might join him at Pontigny. "Your arrival," replied P. Muard, "was for me a decided proof that God desired my departure, for I had made this a condition of my assurance that such was indeed His will." For the present he left him in ignorance of his design of quitting Pontigny, to the possibility of which he had not as yet so much as alluded to any of the Fathers. The fear of discouraging them had great weight with him, and was one of the reasons why he put off the disclosure as long as he could avoid it. We have seen how he finally chose for it the occasion of their July retreat. When he had obtained the consent of the Archbishop at the ecclesiastical retreat in August he resolved to set out as soon as he possibly could. He therefore wrote at once to the Abbé Préau to tell him that all

was arranged, and to beg him to meet him at Avallon, whither he was himself to repair in a few days to give a retreat to the Ursuline Nuns. After specifying the day upon which he was to join him, he said that it was from that town they would commence their journey, but that as yet he knew not where they should make experiment of their new kind of life.

The Abbé Préau took leave of his family on the 14th, and went to Avallon, where P. Muard was occupied with the retreat, but proceeded on the same day to St. Germain-des-Champs by his desire. "Go," he said, "to the house of the good Curé who introduced you into the sacerdotal life. On Wednesday the 20th I will come for you and bid him good-bye before our departure for Italy." He was punctual to his engagement, and P. Benoit says that the day passed very agreeably in company with the Curés of Magny-les-Avallon and St. Germain-des-Champs, both of whom were friends and confidants of P. Muard. The Abbé Bunetier, Curé of Magny, had been commissioned by P. Muard to make some enquiries concerning a site for his projected monastery. There was one in his parish which seemed to offer some advantages, but there were three objections: the restricted space which it would afford, its proximity to Avallon, and the high price demanded by the proprietor. The Abbé Cullin, Curé of St. Germain, had a similar commission. P. Muard and he had already together visited two sites, one of which was much exposed and overlooked by hills, or it would have pleased him greatly; the other was in a wood, where the ground sloped down towards the Cure, a river skirting the forest. In some respects the situation was not as good as the former, but it suited his ideas better on account of its isolation. The wild

solitudes of nature seem to have presented to him an image of inward recollection which was peculiarly attractive to him. Perhaps our tastes and preferences in respect to surrounding scenery have always some mysterious connection with its being more or less typical, or the reverse, of our interior mental and spiritual temperament. In addition to any predilection in P. Muard grounded possibly upon such a cause, he considered an isolated and solitary locality as directly favourable to recollection by keeping away company and eluding public observation. The property belonged to the noble family of Chastellux, and the Curé of St. Germain was directed by P. Muard to sound the family on the subject, and ascertain whether in the event of his building a monastery on their ground he could reckon on their generous dealing in the matter. The Abbé Cullin was, however, not to mention his name.

P. Benoit speaks of P. Muard's goodness, amiability, and sweet simplicity, on the day which they spent together, as beyond expression. His simplicity, indeed, both in his behaviour and in all his dealings had quite a childlike character about it, and he knew how to inspire with it those who placed themselves in near relation to him. We may take as an instance what P. Benoit records in connection with this subject. On their way back to Avallon, which was distant about three miles from St. Germain-des-Champs, after reciting vespers as they walked along, the conversation turned upon their coming journey, and upon what they should do, for as yet they knew not whither they should repair in order to make their noviciate. "In the meantime," said P. Muard, "until God shall dispose of us according to His good pleasure, I ask a favour of you, and that is that both you and the Brother should

follow me blindly, troubling yourselves about nothing. Have no fear, however; you shall not want for anything you need: of this I can assure you." "We were faithful," says P. Benoit, "to this recommendation, and never once asked him how much money he had in hand to meet our expenses."

An implicit trust in Providence for the supply of their necessities was more than ever required of the good Father at that moment, for what most people would have considered a very inopportune, unlucky, and vexatious occurrence had on the previous day emptied his purse. P. Massé had been engaged to preach on the 21st of September at Avallon on the occasion of the profession of four Ursuline novices, but he arrived two days sooner than he was expected, bringing a letter from P. Boyer, who was supplying P. Muard's place during his absence. This letter referred to a pecuniary matter. P. Muard had effected some repairs in the roof of the church at Pontigny, which, as has been noticed, imperatively needed them. The Prefect of Auxerre had by word of mouth guaranteed the sum, and P. Muard had implicitly trusted him. "When the repairs are finished," he had said, "send me the account and it shall be paid out of the money set apart for such purposes." But when the mason who had been employed for the business handed in his bill to the Prefect, he was told to take it to the person who had ordered the work. When this occurred P. Muard was at Avallon; P. Boyer, therefore, wrote at once to let him know that the Prefect refused to acknowledge the debt that had been incurred. P. Muard simply replied, "The Prefect certainly promised to pay, but, since he will not, here are the 200 francs due to the master mason; settle

with him, and there is an end of the matter." So there was also of P. Muard's provision for his journey, but, as we have seen, this weighed very lightly on him, as his cheerfulness had testified; "and, indeed," adds P. Benoit, "I never saw a man so pleased as was our venerated Founder at the thought of having 200 francs less in hand to provide for his journey and meet the expenses of his noviciate". "We are more than ever," he said, "the children of Divine Providence." This thought charmed him. God is, so to say, pledged to supply the needs of those who thus lovingly rely on His paternal care.

We have said that the Abbé Boyer was supplying P. Muard's place during his absence. This calls for a word of explanation. P. Muard was, in fact, still the titular superior of the Pontigny establishment. He had recommended the Fathers to choose for his successor the Père Boyer, whom he had been preparing, unknown to himself, to discharge the functions which would devolve on him, and they were willing to follow his advice; but they insisted strongly on his own retention of the office until the expiration of the three years for which he had been elected. Now, that term would not be completed until the following year. Probably they still clung to the hope of eventually keeping him; anyhow he could not refuse them this favour, and was therefore obliged to begin his new work before he had wholly severed his connection with the former. In the meantime, P. Boyer had been invested by him with full authority for the direction and administration of the house during his absence, the Fathers having consented to this arrangement.

The future Brother Maurus, at present called Brother Francis, who was to be the third companion on the

journey, joined the others on the 21st. Their united pecuniary resources at starting were very slender. Brother Francis had four francs when he left Pontigny, but expended a franc and a-half at Vermenton, where he passed the night, so that he had only two francs and a half remaining; P. Muard had four francs, and P. Benoit a like sum; ten francs and a-half were therefore their whole provision for the long journey before them. Our informant did not know how P. Muard had collected the two hundred francs which he had just disbursed; he never asked him. For a portion of it, however, he seems by and by incidentally to account. Money at that time (1848) was very scarce, and persons even of high position in society were greatly cramped in their means. He mentions a marquise who told a friend she had just fifty centimes left in her purse. All the more credit is due to those who were liberal in giving out of their deep poverty, A certain Mme. Parent, of pious memory, who had recently received P. Benoit hospitably in her house for two days, had, he tells us, sent a hundred and twenty francs to P. Muard. She had but five francs more at her disposal, and these she insisted upon bestowing on her guest.

The pilgrims were, however, like the sons of Jacob, to find money in their sacks. To their great surprise, upon opening their leather bags the first night, each of them discovered therein a twenty-franc piece. Some poor servants at Avallon had privately slipped them in. As we may suppose, the hearts of P. Muard and his companions were much touched by this generous contribution of these poor children of toil. Their charity had not even forgotten to add a supply of thread, needles, and scissors. Nothing, in short, as said P. Muard playfully in a letter written from San Lorenzo

di Fanello, had been forgotten, except one thing—the ability to make use of these implements. The three companions set out on their journey on Friday, the 22nd of September, at four o'clock in the morning, P. Muard being unwilling to pass through his old parish at broad daylight, with the chance of meeting an acquaintance who might question him as to whither he and the two with him were going. They had joined him at the house of his old friend, Mme. Dessignes, where he had spent the night in prayer and in writing letters, ten minutes sleep on his chair having sufficed him for repose. P. Massé had insisted on accompanying his revered father for a portion of the way, glad also to render him the little parting service of carrying his travelling bag. When they had reached the spot where the road to Sauvigny-les-Bois branches off he restored it to him, and knelt down to ask his blessing. They then embraced affectionately, bidding each other farewell till they should meet again. P. Muard gave P. Massé a silken purse which he had received as a present, but judged to be unsuitable to his condition, and P. Massé ever after kept it as a memento of him. With tears in his eyes he retraced his steps to Avallon, while the travellers gaily resumed their way, shouldering their bags and in happy ignorance as yet of the notable pecuniary addition which they contained. P. Muard was especially joyous. "I feel," he said, and these were his first words after parting with P. Massé —"I feel like the little bird of whom the thread that held it captive has been cut; nothing any longer tethers me to earth. I am discharged of the headship of Pontigny, the responsibility of which weighed so heavily upon me."

By and by they met two waggoners from Joux-la-

Ville, who, recognising their former pastor, were much astonished at seeing him travelling in the guise of a common wayfarer, with a pack on his back. He spoke to them for a minute, and then the three pilgrims began their meditation, keeping perfect silence for the space of an hour. On reaching Sainte Magnance they stopped for the two priests to say Mass. The old Curé was a great friend of P. Muard, and in his confidence, being also commissioned to be on the look-out for a site for the monastery. After saying Mass they partook of dinner at the presbytery, and then made a fresh start. The venerable Curé must needs accompany them some way, and carry P. Muard's travelling-bag. It seemed to be quite a pleasure to the old man to pass through the Bourg of Rouvray, where he was well known, equipped in this fashion. "We are all off, you see," was his greeting to those he met, evidently amused at having made them open their eyes in astonishment. Good and pious men will sometimes have their jokes, and certainly this was a very harmless one. The journey was not to last long. As soon as he had displayed himself to Rouvray the Curé took leave of his friends, wishing them a happy return. The pilgrims from the very first followed our Lord's counsel to the letter, taking with them but one garment and one pair of stockings. Whether these were to be worn until they were fairly worn out, without change, is not explained. The bags consequently contained but little, and had at least the advantage of being light. So were the hearts of those who carried them, notwithstanding their poverty; all the lighter, indeed, for they had no solicitude, possessing little to be either spoilt or lost.

They had walked but a few miles on the road to

Saulieu when they were overtaken by a public conveyance, of the kind called a *patache*. There was but one occupant, so the driver stopped and asked them whether they would not like a lift as far as Saulieu. P. Muard, who made a point of always enquiring beforehand what there was to pay, on finding that the charge would be only a franc and a half for the three, readily agreed. Few people were travelling about at that time, partly from the general penury and slackness of trade, and partly from a want of confidence, which kept most persons at home. The occupant of the vehicle seemed to be an old soldier. He said he was just returned from Paris, where he had been canvassing for the election of the Prince Louis Napoleon as deputy. P. Muard and he got into conversation, which soon degenerated into a very eager discussion. He was one of those talkers with whom it is particularly vexatious to argue. He asked a number of questions without waiting for their answers, raised difficulties without apparently caring for their solution, and passed rapidly from one subject to another which had no connection with it. He talked of the Bible, of Moses, of the Creation, of the Deluge, and all like one who is using words with no corresponding ideas. "I know you are more learned than I am," he said to P. Muard, "that you are a priest, and hold to your religion, which teaches you that Jesus Christ is contained in a morsel of bread." "You either believe or you do not believe," replied P. Muard. "If you do not believe, it is useless to have any discussion with you; if you do believe, then join with me in making an act of faith in the Real Presence, and we are agreed."

His interlocutor passed on, as usual, to something else. "There is another thing which I cannot under-

stand; it is why the Catholic religion does not leave men in the belief in which they were born. For what purpose all these missionaries who go off to foreign lands, to torment those who are living according to their own creed? They would do much better to remain in France, and allow people to live and die in the religion of their fathers." P. Muard asked him whether, if he were labouring under a grievous mistake and some person were to say to one who had forsaken all in order to enlighten him, "Leave him alone in his error," he would not reply that to hold such language proved a man to be barbarous and inhuman. P. Benoit thought the whole discussion anything but interesting from the gross ignorance of this man of many words; so was not sorry, it would seem, when the vehicle stopped at the little town of Saulieu, and they all alighted. "I hope, M. l'Abbé," said the gentleman taking the Father's hand, "that we part good friends. I flatter myself with the hope that you are not angry with me." "No indeed," P. Muard answered, "I believe you to be a good man, and even a good Christian." He was able to say this sincerely, for this empty-headed talker had evidently been rather retailing the stupid anti-Christian objections he had heard others make than expressing any real convictions of his own. Besides, P. Muard always gave persons the benefit of a doubt, if he could do no more, and strove to believe the best of them. The officer was pleased and conciliated, for he made him a most respectful bow as he turned away.

We shall not find the Father responding so placidly to the next unpleasant observations addressed to him. He had his reasons in both cases, for he never spoke hastily. He and his two companions now went straight for the office to take their places in the public convey-

ance for Châlons-sur-Saône. All the places were engaged, but P. Muard was told that, if they would wait two hours, there would be another coach starting for Autun. Having enquired the distance and the fare, he simply observed that the charge was high, when the mistress of the hotel, who was sitting on a bench outside, seeing that the spokesman was a priest, broke out with some insolent remarks about the *casuel*.* P. Muard, meek and forbearing as he was where he was himself personally concerned, was not the man to permit this assault on the dignity of the priestly character to pass unreproved. "Madam," he said, in a tone of much energy, "I think I may enquire about the fare from Saulieu to Autun without offence to any one. I am a priest, it is true, but I am not a Curé, and, supposing I was, you have no right to insult me publicly as you have just done." This smart rebuke silenced the dame. While waiting for the coach to start, our pilgrims went to the church to adore our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament and say vespers. They also visited the tomb of St. Andoche, who suffered martyrdom at that place, where he is still much venerated, or, at least, was so at the date to which we are referring.

It was late when they reached Autun, it being between eleven and twelve o'clock. P. Muard asked for a room with two beds, to which they were shown. He then said to his companions, "Each of you choose your bed, here is mine"; and he pointed to the chairs. Having arranged four of them, as was his wont, he placed his travelling-bag on one of them for a pillow, and, as he had not slept the preceding night and had been travelling nearly all the day, he had no sooner

* The offerings usually made for Masses of private intention and other voluntary fees.

stretched himself on this improvised couch than he was fast asleep. His companions were not a little surprised and confounded at this proceeding, not being, as yet, acquainted with his habitual acts of mortification. For them to repose in two comfortable beds while their leader and superior was extended on some hard chairs was strange to them. They had yet to learn that in everything he would be a true leader and superior; a leader in the road of penance and nobly superior to all the ease and enjoyment which the things of earth can supply, by despising and rejecting them.

By six o'clock the next morning they were in the cathedral to hear Mass, as the diligence started at seven for Châlons-sur-Saône, where it was to arrive at two o'clock. This Saturday being an Ember Day, our pilgrims did not break their fast until near three o'clock, after which they repaired to the old cathedral to visit our Lord and say their office. They found the Archpriest in the sacristy, and asked his permission to say Mass the next morning at five o'clock, that they might be able to profit by the steamboat for Trévoux between six and seven. The Archpriest was most gracious, and said to P. Muard, who was presenting him with his *celebret*, "It is needless, M. l'Abbé, for you bear it in your face". The next morning they were at the church by five, and found the sacristan as complaisant as the Archpriest had been. He served one Mass, and the Brother served the other, so that they were free before six o'clock to return to the hotel and embark. The boat did not reach Trévoux before two o'clock, for the water was low and the navigation difficult. Trévoux is about three miles and a quarter from Ars. It was thither that the pilgrims or, rather, P. Muard, whom the others blindly followed, was

directing his course. After a hasty dinner, and attending vespers at the church, the party were once more on the road with their faces turned towards that village now ever-memorable for its saintly Curé.

CHAPTER XVI.

ARS AND ITS CURÉ. VOYAGE TO ROME.

IT was on the road from Trévoux to Ars that P. Muard spoke to his companions for the first time of the mission he had received, and now, when he at last opened his mouth upon the subject, it was fully and frankly. He concealed nothing of the supernatural communications made to him, beginning with the vision which he saw on the way from Venouze to Pontigny on the 25th of April, 1845, the day of the procession of St. Mark. He told them also of his retreat at Piffonds, and of all he suffered in order to ascertain the will of God ; and he did not conceal from them the four obstacles which rose up before his mind and which he had to surmount ere he could set his hand to the work. With his accustomed simplicity he said to them, "If I speak to you of all these things it is not to satisfy vanity, but, since you are the first whom our Lord has called, it is well, now that we have begun this new kind of life, that you should know that it is not my own will that I am doing, but the will of God clearly signified to me. I am constrained to act under pain of damnation, as, on the other hand, Heaven is promised to me if I execute this work." The two listened to his words with indescribable pleasure, not, indeed, that what he said added any-

thing to their conviction, which had been as deep and solid from the very first day when they had each of them had the happiness of meeting this man of God in a manner so providential. The slightest doubt had never, in fact, crossed their minds but that they were doing God's will in following him. It need scarcely be observed that they gave him full credit for his assertion that he made this communication to them in no boastful spirit, but from his sense of the necessity incumbent upon him not to leave them in ignorance of the object of their journey or of his ultimate plans.

The way had seemed very short to them, but now Ars came in sight, and, changing the conversation, P. Muard began to speak to them of the wonderful man whom they were about to see. The little village as yet numbered only about four hundred inhabitants, but three or four diligences ran daily between Lyons and this heretofore obscure place, and even these were quite insufficient for the conveyance of the crowds that flocked thither from all parts. Bad as the world is, it is not insensible to the attractions of exalted holiness, even when exhibited in the case of a man wholly wanting in all those personal gifts and graces which are calculated to win its admiration. This, as will be remembered, was not the first visit which P. Muard paid to the Curé of Ars. He was there in company with P. Séhon, one of the Marist Fathers, in the year 1841, and he now went straight to the house of Mlle. Ricotier, where he had lodged on that occasion. She had the management of all M. Vianney's little temporal affairs, and gave the pilgrims a room in which were stowed away some old boxes belonging to the Curé, which he had caused to be removed from the presbytery, desiring to keep nothing there which was

useless. Mlle. Ricotier's house was separated only by the cemetery from the church, which was so full of people that our pilgrims could not make their way into the nave, but had to remain near the entrance door close to the Chapel of the Angels.

Their pious hostess related to them how one day the good Curé came and told her of a thought which had shot into his mind while he was in the confessional. It was to have three angels represented as contending with each other at the entrance of the church—contending, we presume, for the devotion of the faithful in regard to the several objects of their patronage. * One was to be the angel of the diocese, another the angel of the parish, and the third the guardian-angel of each particular soul. "I was obliged," she said, "to go off to Lyons that very day with orders to purchase and bring them back with me. He placed them in this chapel, which you have seen, and where you may have read what each is saying to the other. 'I am the angel of the diocese;' 'I am the angel of the parish;' 'I am the guardian-angel of each individual soul.' When once an idea has got possession of him, you must do at once what he desires." P. Benoit makes the following observation upon this curious trait in the holy man's character. "This example of the good Curé shows that even saints who have arrived at a high degree of perfection always retain something of their natural disposition and its imperfections." Such peculiarities would seem to appertain to the temperament, the last thing, perhaps, which undergoes a thorough change, and which, it may please God in some respects and for occult reasons of His own to leave unchanged, yet

* Comp. Daniel x. 13, 20, 21.

without detriment to the sanctity of the soul which is not consciously moved to observe and subdue them.

The Curé gave an instruction at the fall of the day. P. Benoit describes him as bearing in his countenance the marks of his great mortifications. He commenced on the subject of venial sin, from which he passed on to that of mortal sin. His voice was very feeble, but so penetrating that they could hear him distinctly, though they were at a considerable distance. His whole person, his manner of preaching, often striking one hand on the other, had an expressiveness and a power to stir his hearers as great as the words he uttered. When he descended from the pulpit they waited for some time till the crowd had streamed out of the church, when they were able to approach the sanctuary. After praying awhile P. Muard led the way through a side-door, which conducted to the presbytery. They found the Curé on the threshold of his house, speaking to a lady and holding in his hand an old-fashioned lamp. He left her to receive P. Muard, who reminded him that it was not the first time they had met, for that he had had the honour of seeing him, some years previous, when he was accompanied by a Marist Father, now in Oceania. M. Vianney had not forgotten the visit, and promised to speak to him the following morning. In the meantime he said he would take them where they would be well lodged, and, though P. Muard begged him not to trouble himself, since they were already installed in the very quarters he designed for them, the good man insisted on accompanying them with his antique lamp to light them across the cemetery. He told them he had a vicaire who spoke well, and he was much satisfied with him. When they reached the door he

bade them good night and returned to the presbytery. The vicaire whom he so favourably mentioned lived quite close, and sent to ask them to spend the evening with him; an invitation which they gladly accepted, feeling sure that they would hear edifying particulars concerning the holy Curé, whom he had such exceptional opportunities of knowing and observing.

They were not disappointed; for the Vicaire told them of many marvellous things which he had witnessed, the fruits and effects of a still more marvellous sanctity. The Curé of Ars was, in fact, in his own person a greater miracle than any with which it pleased God to reward his faith and child-like dependence on Providence. "I am often," he said, "obliged to carry him out of the confessional to save him from the throng of people who come to unburden their consciences and consult him about every manner of affair; otherwise he would leave his life there." "Does he make any resistance?" asked P. Muard. "No; he is aware that I have received orders to act in this way, and that it is the desire of our bishop, Mgr. de Belley. His life is truly admirable. At this moment he is occupying himself more about souls than bodies. One day he said to St. Philomena, 'What does it matter that a person should go to Heaven wanting an eye, or an arm, or a leg? Go and fetch me some sinners.' From that day sinners have flocked in greater numbers to Ars, but the good Curé has suffered in consequence, and still suffers; for it is certain that he is beaten, and well beaten, by the devil when sinners resolve to go to confession. In short, he is a saint worthy of the first ages of the Church."

P. Muard obtained leave for them both to say Mass on the morrow at St. Philomena's altar after a

certain hour when it would be free. They repaired early to the church to make their meditation and say office, and wait for their opportunity of seeing the Curé. He entered by the side-door, walking slowly with his hands joined, and attired in his surplice. He knelt to adore our Lord for a few minutes, and then passed into the sacristy to vest himself for his Mass, at which they had the happiness to assist. When he had concluded and made his thanksgiving he prepared to hear the men's confessions, not in a confessional, but behind the altar, seated on a chair. Crowds of men were gathered round awaiting their turn. P. Muard was allowed to take precedence of all. He spoke to the Curé of his plans, and began relating to him what had preceded with reference to the mission which our Lord had given him. But he had scarcely commenced when the Curé, like one who knows everything already, said, "It is well, go to Italy; the good God will replenish you with graces; fear nothing, it is the work of God. You will meet with contradictions, men will laugh at you; so much the better, you will be blessed in suffering for our Lord. Be not discouraged, I will pray for you that the Holy Spirit may enlighten you, and give you the needful strength to accomplish the will of God." P. Muard retired, and then P. Benoit presented himself. After making his confession, he told the Curé that he was accompanying the priest whom he had just heard; upon which he repeated these same words no less than six times: "Blessed are you". Next came the Brother's turn, who also told the Curé that he was following the priest whose confession he had heard first. M. Vianney replied, "Do all which that priest bids you do, follow him blindly," and would not hear his confession.

When P. Muard and his companion had said their Masses at St. Philomena's altar, and thanked our Lord with all their hearts for the favours He had granted them, they left the church to go and prepare for their departure for Lyons. After breakfast they set out, Mlle. Ricotier showing them the shortest way to the main road. When their hostess had left them, P. Muard, after a brief silence, exclaimed, "How mighty is virtue! What prodigies does it not work!" One of the party observed that this holy man doubtless never committed any sin. "That he no longer sins formally," replied P. Muard, "we may readily believe, for on the day that he should commit any grave sin all his prestige would vanish; but to say he is no longer tempted to sin would be quite another thing. Vanity must come to importune him, as it importunes others." Vanity seems to have been one of the vices most dreaded by P. Muard, and yet it would have been difficult to single out a person who appeared more entirely free from it; perhaps, indeed, for this very reason, he was so completely on his guard against it, and put it to death by his unceasing acts of mortification. He then told his companions that since the morning it had been decided that they should proceed to Italy by sea instead of by land. Of course the decision was his own, but, as he had probably recommended himself to the Lord for guidance when he offered the Adorable Sacrifice, he spoke of the matter as decided for him. Until P. Muard had sought to ascertain the mind of the Spirit he never determined upon any course. This, however, did not prevent his making the subject a matter of reasonable consideration, and exercising his own judgment upon it. Even the Apostles, when assembled in council,

divinely illuminated as they were and guarded against teaching error, were not precluded from the employment of their own understandings? "It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and *to us*".*

He proceeded to allege substantial reasons for preferring the sea voyage to the land journey. It would take much less time and involve much less labour and difficulty, for the season was far advanced and they would have to cross the Alps, where the snow perhaps was already beginning to fall and encumber the paths. P. Muard, who knew the city of Lyons well, took his companions straight to an hotel on the Place Bellecour, very near the Rhone, that they might be close at hand to embark the next morning for Avignon. When they had deposited their bags he led them to Notre Dame de Fourvières, but it was late by the time they had reached the heights and the doors of the church had just been closed for the night. They knocked, but there was no response, so the Father took them to the terrace whence they could have a beautiful view of a large portion of the city extended at their feet and now beginning to sparkle with countless lamps. But his eye was still attracted towards the church, where he espied a light proceeding from the sacristy; upon which they quickly returned, knocked again, and were admitted. They found a priest in the sacristy, of whom P. Muard asked permission for them to kneel for a minute in prayer before the image of Our Lady of Fourvières. They had thus the happiness of being able to recommend to her their voyage and the work which they had undertaken. "The Blessed Virgin never refuses me anything," said P. Muard, as they left the church; "and so she provided the means for us to be admitted

* Acts xv. 28.

to honour her in this sanctuary which is so dear to her and where she loves so much to manifest her power." After visiting the terrace a second time, whence the Father pointed out the principal quarters of the town, lying like an illuminated map below them, they returned to their hotel. That night he again surrendered the two beds to his companions, and, as there were only three chairs in the room, he was not able to construct as good a substitute for himself as usual, at which he rejoiced. "It will be a greater mortification for my body," he said, "which has such need of doing penance."

The steamboat conveyed them to Avignon the following day. The river being low, which necessitated precautions, rendered the voyage slow. P. Muard, although he remained on deck, kept aloof from the company on board, for he preferred conversing with God to talking to men. They reached Avignon at three o'clock. P. Benoit remembered that there was a young man of his acquaintance at the place whom he felt desirous to see. It so happened that his search for him consumed a considerable time, and, when he returned bringing his friend with him, P. Muard gently told him he had been wrong to go away without apprizing him, for he had been very uneasy at his long absence. This little circumstance shows what a paternal superintendence the good Father exercised over his followers. However, this incident had providentially a good result, as, through the instrumentality of this young man, P. Muard was enabled to obtain a copy of an Itinerary which was afterwards extremely useful to them in Italy, although the edition was, in fact, sold out. The next day, Wednesday the 27th, they took the train to Marseilles, the first time that P. Benoit or the Brother had ever travelled by railway.

At Marseilles they had some vexatious trouble about the renewal of their passports. The Secretary-General at the Prefecture told them that, being strangers, they must obtain a certificate from the Vicar-General or some well-known priest of the town before they could receive their passports for Rome. The Bishop's palace was a long way off, and, as it turned out, an ecclesiastical retreat being in progress, all the clergy were attending it at the Petit Séminaire; thither consequently they had to proceed. However, the business was at last accomplished and the absurd formality complied with; only, unfortunately, the Vicar-General, who gave them their certificate, with the view of diminishing the expense, entered the Brother as P. Benoit's servant, a device which was afterwards productive of some inconvenience to the party. The next morning they had the much valued privilege of saying Mass at Notre Dame-de-la-Garde; after which they went to the Prefecture for their passports and took them to be viséd by the consul for the Pontifical States. The next thing was to engage their passage to Cività Vecchia by the morrow's steamer. They secured their places in the cheapest way possible, being entered only as deck passengers, the charge for the three being seventy-eight francs. We cannot help feeling a little puzzled as to whence they derived the money which even their economical journey necessarily required. With the two hundred francs which P. Muard had in his possession at Avallon, all would have been easy, but, so far as we can judge, they had started with only seventy francs, fifty centimes, and it is not clear when or from what source they could have replenished their purse. Providence, doubtless, had not failed the good Father, but, as P. Benoit asked no

questions, he was very likely in the same ignorance with which we must be ourselves contented.

They had now the remainder of the day at their disposal, and P. Muard was minded to make it one of recreation to his spiritual children by taking them about to see the city. It is interesting to observe such little traits of indulgent kindness in this austere man. But, in fact, his hardness was all for himself, and, although he was strict in his requirements and held up a high standard of self-denial as that at which they ought to aim, he was never rigid in its enforcement, making allowance for weakness in others which he never tolerated in himself, and rather drawing them on by the force of his own example than bringing any pressure of authority to bear upon them. On principle, however, he must necessarily have held that recreation has its place even in the severest religious life, but, over and above this, we continually notice proofs of the native kindness of his disposition in the pleasure he evidently took in making others happy. He had a little surprise in store for them on this occasion. "We are going," he said, "to have a good dinner, to make some little amends to ourselves for the past." Of this remarkable meal we can give no further particulars except that the Father ordered a dish with which neither of his two companions was acquainted—nor, indeed, are we,*—and that the dinner cost in all five francs. In the evening P. Muard wrote to the Archbishop of Sens, announcing to him his departure for Rome the next day. He had not chosen to write sooner, never having rid himself of the fear

* We give its French title for the benefit of such of our readers as may have greater culinary knowledge—*homard crustacé.*

of being ordered back to Pontigny, for which reason also he had not been desirous of furnishing the prelate with his address until already too far away to render a recall in the least degree probable. "Saints," observes P. Benoit, "know how to ally human prudence with the things of God, and never neglect human means, as people are sometimes led to imagine."

The next morning, Sept. 29th, after saying Mass, and placing themselves under the protection of the great archangel, they returned to the hotel to prepare for their embarkation at nine o'clock. P. Muard informed his companions that it was not well to go on board with an empty stomach, and that the best preservative against sea-sickness was to make a good meal previously. Accordingly, he had a species of potato-salad prepared for breakfast. They followed his advice, and partook comfortably of this dish, which was supposed to be so powerful an antidote. The good Father hardly seems to have had as much discrimination regarding the bodily as the spiritual interior, for his prescription was far from successful, and P. Benoit, who was, doubtless, making his first essay of a sea-voyage, suffered pitiably. But he did not receive much pity from P. Muard, who could not help laughing a little when he saw him staggering about and unable to keep his legs. He had gone through the same ordeal on his first visit to Rome, and considered himself now as well seasoned. "*Rira bien qui rira le dernier*,"* said P. Benoit, little knowing that he would prove a true prophet. Towards the close of the day he became better, and as evening fell he began to consider where he should pass the night, for it had turned very cold. P. Muard extended himself upon a

* "He will laugh best who laughs last."

bench on deck, and was soon sound asleep. P. Benoit walked up and down to keep himself warm, and then, perceiving a steerage passenger descending into some unknown depth below, he followed him. Here, finding an empty place, he took it without ceremony. It was neither a bed nor a hammock, but a sort of wooden armchair.

When morning came he returned on deck, and found the Father pacing to and fro. "Where have you spent the night?" he asked. "Down below in the thirds," said P. Benoit; "one is under shelter there, at any rate." P. Muard told him he was right, for it had been very cold on deck, and it would have been a risk for him to remain there. He had himself found it very difficult to keep warm; still he asserted that he had spent a good night, and had risen early to walk about and make his meditation. Then, turning his eyes towards the expanse of ocean, "Nothing," he said, "raises the soul to God so much as the spectacle of the sea and of the heavens. You find yourself between the firmament and the waters; then it is that you realize the words of David in the Psalms, when he speaks of the sea and its heaving waves. How admirable it is, and how easily does the heart detach itself from the things of earth!" During the whole passage he made a solitude for himself, never mingling with the other passengers, but maintaining a state of unbroken union with our Lord and engaged in continual prayer. He had some conversation, however, with his disciples, and it was during this voyage that he related to P. Benoit the communication made to him in the church of St. Martin at Avallon in the December of 1839. He again declared that it was from no motive of vanity he spoke of such matters; on the contrary, it cost him much to

allude to anything of the sort; but that it was well that one who was beginning this work with him should be informed of these things, which, after all, he added, "were only gratuitous favours which our Lord granted me, notwithstanding my unworthiness, to encourage me to do His holy will".

The manner in which the Father made this confidence touched his follower's heart even more than the confidence itself. It seemed to be humility impersonated that was addressing him by his lips and recounting with pain rather than satisfaction the interior graces vouchsafed to him. P. Benoit assured him that, as respected his determination to follow him wherever he might please to lead them, nothing further was needed, since he was as deeply convinced as was P. Muard himself that the work they had undertaken was, not his own, but God's work. The boat stopped for three hours at Genoa, which only allowed them time to visit the beautiful church of the Annunziata. They had a few more hours at Leghorn on the following day, which was Sunday and, being also the 1st of October, the festival of the Holy Rosary. Unable to say Mass, they were obliged to content themselves with hearing it at the cathedral. That night, the last of their passage, was to be a very trying one. The sea which had previously been calm, began to heave ominously, and every sign announced the approach of a stiff gale. "We shall have a rough night," remarked the crew, and so it proved. P. Muard, of course, could not avail himself of his usual couch on account of the violent pitching of the vessel, and, indeed, the deck was drenched with water owing to the seas they were constantly shipping. All went below except our two priests, and now P. Muard's turn of suffering came, of

which his faithful follower did not fail to remind him. The Brother appears to have been a good sailor. All, however, were glad enough when the port of Cività Vecchia came in sight, and still more when they had safely cleared the narrow entrance and found themselves within its calm shelter at seven o'clock in the morning.

They did not leave Cività Vecchia for Rome until five o'clock in the afternoon, and reached the little half-way inn at Palo at about eleven o'clock, whence, after two hours' rest, their *voiturier* took them on, and at about seven o'clock in the morning of October the 3rd they crossed the bridge of St. Angelo and were at last within the precincts of the Eternal City. With grateful hearts they went into the church nearest to the place where they alighted, Santa Maria dei Martiri, to return thanks for having accomplished their long journey in peace and safety, and to beg of Mary the further grace of protection during their stay at Rome.

CHAPTER XVII.

A Fruitless Search.

The affairs of the soul had always precedence with P. Muard; the spiritual breakfast was therefore first secured, the material breakfast had to take its chance, and was very commonly, as we have seen, omitted altogether. Leaving their carriage, as has been observed, near the old Pantheon, now Santa Maria dei Martiri, the party having made their thanksgiving in the church, followed their leader to St. John Lateran, depositing their bags at a neighbouring hotel. After adoring our Lord in this mother of all churches they

partook of some bodily refreshment, and then proceeded at once to Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, not omitting on their way to ascend the Santa Scalâ on their knees, to gain the indulgences attached to this pious practice. P. Muard's object in visiting Santa Croce was to speak to the Abbot of the Cistercians, who served that church, in order to ascertain if he had any spot which he was willing to lend or let, wherein he and his associates could begin their new order of life; so, after paying their devotions, he asked for him, but found he was absent at that moment. From Santa Croce, the Father took his companions to Santa Maria Maggiore, and thence to St. Peter's. He already knew Rome and all its churches and sanctuaries well; in visiting them, therefore, he was only satisfying his devotion, but he was also desirous of introducing his spiritual children to these sacred places.

After adoring our Lord in the chapel where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved, they went to kiss the foot of the great Apostle. P. Muard then placed his head underneath it to receive his blessing, in which pious act his companions imitated him. They then went and knelt at the Confession of St. Peter and St. Paul, as the tomb of the Apostles is called. Here P. Muard remained a long time in profound recollection, while the others visited every portion of that marvellous edifice. Returning after their round they found him still absorbed in prayer. By and by he came to himself, arose from his knees, and, after pointing out to them a few as yet unnoticed objects of interest, turned his steps to the door to depart. Having now seen four of the principal churches of Rome, it was time to think of their night's lodging, for they had no intention of remaining in such expensive quarters as the hotel at

which they had left their bags. The Father had hoped to be taken in where he and P. Séhon had been accommodated by a certain good dame, Patriarcha, as she was called, but to her great sorrow, for she remembered P. Muard well, she had not a room to spare. However, she put them in the way of seeking another suitable and reasonable lodging near the Piazza Navona. Here they found two rooms adjoining each other, which, after a little bargaining, the Father engaged. "We were now," says the narrator, "sure of not camping out under the canopy of heaven."

The journal from which we quote contains a brief but particular account of these transactions, and of all else that occurred to the party. It is, in fact, a diary written with the most perfect simplicity. It is difficult to resist the temptation of transcribing much more than our space can permit, for all that relates to this good man, however slight it may be, and to his behaviour in the passing events of each day, artlessly related as it is here by an eye-witness, has a singular charm and often a moral besides. We must content ourselves, however, with culling what more immediately concerns the great purpose which P. Muard had in view. He allotted to his companions the room which contained two beds, and kept for himself the single-bedded room. Did he occupy the bed or, as usual, sleep on chairs? No one knew, but of one thing P. Benoit is confident, that on neither bed nor chairs did he recline for long, but spent a great part of the night in prayer. The next morning they obtained permission of the Theatine Fathers to say Mass in their neighbouring church of Sant' Andrea della Valle. When they returned the Brother was despatched into the Piazza Navona, hard by, to purchase some fruit. This, with bread and water, made

up their breakfast and, indeed, their staple fare for at least nine days, P. Muard having proposed a novena to draw down the grace of God upon their enterprise, during which they should eat nothing else.

Their immediate object was to discover some suitable place for the experiment they were about to make, and on this search they set out after breakfast. A French priest, who at Dame Patriarcha's request had shown them the way to their present lodging, had told them that on the Palatine hill there were Franciscans who were very regular in their observance. In their convent of San Bonaventura they might possibly be both able and willing to spare them a corner for the carrying out of their design. Hither, accordingly, they directed their steps, and, entering the church, they prayed our Lord to favour this their first application, and strove also to interest in their cause the Blessed Leonard of Port Maurice, whose relics reposed under the High Altar. P. Muard much loved St. Francis of Assisi, and for a certain time, as has been noticed, was strongly attracted towards his rule. It was no doubt, therefore, a satisfaction to him to make his first overtures to the Franciscans. Their devotions ended, they went to the parlour, and, on ringing the bell, the door was opened by a son of St. Francis, whose look of poverty showed he was worthy of his spiritual father. P. Muard asked to see the Father-Guardian; he was out, but the Father-Vicar was there. P. Muard expressed a desire to go to confession to him and was admitted. After making his confession in Latin, he said a word or two about his project, and the Vicar bade him return the next day at the same hour, when he could see the Father-Guardian and speak to him on the subject. Hitherto, there was, at least, nothing unpropitious to his hopes.

It was also a festival of St. Francis, when the saint might be expected to be specially gracious, so they all went in the evening to Ara Cœli, the mother-house of the Franciscans, to assist at Benediction. It was given by the General of the Dominicans. Such is the practice of the two Orders ever since the days of St. Dominic and St. Francis. On St. Dominic's festival it is the General of the Franciscans who solemnly officiates at the Minerva.

The next morning, October 5th, they said their Masses at the Ara Cœli, and then made their way to the Convent of San Bonaventura. The bell was answered by the same Brother they had seen on the previous day; he immediately went to seek the Father-Guardian, who promptly came, having been already apprized by the Vicar of the object of their visit. Our narrator describes this good Father as short of stature and bearing on his face the impress of a mortified life, but he did not appear very old. He accosted P. Muard with much sweetness, but withal a certain expression of sly humour, which P. Benoit considers to be frequently observable in Italians, particularly in their intercourse with the French. Be this as it may, the look had its significance in this case, as the three Frenchmen were about to find. He told P. Muard that he had two religious who were on the point of making their passage to Eternity, and that their mode of living had shortened their days. In fine, while observing all the outward forms of politeness, he treated the Father like one demented, who does not well know what he is attempting. "I have no room I could let you have in our convent," he said; and it seemed as if it were in his mind to add that if he had any he would not give it; at least this was the impression which his manner conveyed. He then

courteously offered to shew them the cell in which the Blessed Leonard of Port Maurice expired. P. Muard replied, with his accustomed simplicity and calmness, "We thank you, but they had the goodness, my Reverend Father-Guardian, to let us visit it in your absence yesterday". Then he asked for his blessing, and they all three knelt down to receive it.

As they left the convent P. Muard said, "St. Francis will have nothing to say to us. At the time of my vision at Venouze I was thinking of following his rule." This rejection must, we might imagine, have been, not only disappointing to him, but mortifying, for there was a covered irony in the Father-Guardian's manner which there was no mistaking. The prediction of the Curé d'Ars was beginning to be fulfilled; he was to be ridiculed as well as contradicted. To be ridiculed by bad men is a comparative trifle, but to be considered a fool by good men and religious, from whom sympathy, at least, might be expected, is galling; at least it would be so to most people. But the Father was overflowing with joy, a spiritual joy which utterly drowned the rebellion of nature, if such arose within him. He went off to the Church of St. Camillus of Lellis to offer a *Te Deum*, an invariable practice of his after a repulse or disappointment, and to thank our Lord for having permitted that they should he humiliated for the love of Him. That evening he sent his two associates to the Minerva hotel, where a French architect, M, Rainée, who had charge of the monuments of the Amiens diocese, and a young Englishman of the same profession were lodging. These gentlemen had made the short passage from Leghorn to Cività Vecchia, in company with our party, and had behaved with much courtesy and friendliness to P.

Muard, offering to lend him some works which might interest him during their stay at Rome. And, in point of fact, the Father was glad to borrow a book which he believed they possessed. This was the purport of the visit in question, but it was to have momentous consequences little anticipated.

M. Rainée and his companion had obtained tickets for visiting the Vatican Museum and the Cupola of St. Peter's, and offered to take their new friends along with them. A message to this effect was conveyed to P. Muard. He had, however, on his former visit to Rome seen the Museum and ascended to the Cupola; he did not wish therefore to go again, but was very glad that P. Benoit and the Brother should avail themselves of the kind offer. All was accordingly arranged, and it was settled that on the 9th of October they should, at an hour agreed upon, meet these gentlemen at St. Peter's. Three days therefore would intervene before this expedition; they were not idly spent. P. Muard took his companions round to see all that Rome contained of highest interest, with an eye always to the main object which ever occupied his thoughts. For instance, we find him, when arrived at the summit of Monte Celio, looking about among the trees and vineyards planted in enclosures to see if there might not be some dilapidated and forsaken building which would serve them for a retreat. But there was nothing of the sort. By and by they found themselves facing the Church of Santo Stefano Rotondo, which, however, was closed. On his previous visit to Rome P. Muard had seen it, and from its mural paintings, representing the tortures to which the early Christians were subjected, he told them he had often drawn, when preaching on hell, figures to represent its torments.

After exploring Monte Celio in all directions he said, "Let us go to Santa Maria degli Angeli; it is St. Bruno's day, and possibly the Carthusians may be able to provide us with what we have hitherto sought in vain. On their way thither, and when passing through the Piazza of St. John Lateran, P. Benoit had the unexpected delight of seeing the Holy Father. P. Muard had taken the Brother to point out some monument to him, he forgets what, and he was waiting for them. Suddenly he perceived the carriage of Pius IX. approaching, and people kneeling and crying out in Italian, "Holy Father, your blessing!" He followed their example, and knelt also. The horses were not going fast, so he had a good view of the Sovereign Pontiff. Moreover, to his great joy, the Pope looked at him whilst bestowing his benediction. "We shall see him," said P. Muard, whom he hastened to apprize of his good fortune, "when we have made the experiment of our new mode of life. At present it would be useless to ask for an audience." They proceeded to Santa Maria degli Angeli, which, with the Carthusian monastery adjoining, stands on the site of the ancient Baths of Diocletian. Certain portions of this large building were now no longer occupied, and P. Muard thought that here he might succeed in finding some retired quarters, but there was nothing that would have answered his purpose.

His next attempt was made at a Franciscan convent close to the Church of the Twelve Apostles served by these religious. It was, however, only in the form of a visit to a priest of their order with whom he was acquainted, Père Vaurés, who he thought might be able to aid them in their search. P. Vaurés recommended him to speak to Cardinal Orioli, who lived in their

convent, and who was the Protector and Superior of several religious communities possessing houses in the neighbourhood of Rome. He might possibly be able to assist him. P. Muard went at once to see the old Cardinal, who could speak French very well, having during the captivity of Pius VII. spent several years in the vicinity of Lyons. He received the Father very graciously, encouraged him in his project, and advised him to visit the Roman Campagna, where between San Paolo *fuori le mura* and San Sebastiano he would find isolated houses, most of them the property of communities of religious women. Perhaps there might be some vacant at present which these nuns would be willing to cede to him. He could obtain permission to view them from their guardians; after which he might address a petition to the Holy Father, which he would himself endorse and present at the earliest opportunity, recommending him specially at the same time to his Holiness. That very evening P. Muard began to draw up the petition, although he had yet to seek and find the house. The petition was never to be finished.

On the following day the search in the Campagna was undertaken. P. Benoit gives in detail an account of all the holy places they visited. At the Tre Fontane, where there was a convent of Capuchins, they found only one of the community in charge, the rest being absent on account of the unhealthiness of the locality during the summer heats. His garments were poor, as became a son of St. Francis, and he behaved to them with the most brotherly courtesy and kindness. Their excursion over the Agro Romano was very fatiguing and perfectly barren of results. They found one house belonging to some nuns which they would have been glad to explore, but they knocked in vain. P. Muard

peeped through the key-hole to get some idea of the interior, but could see nothing. When they reached the road leading to San Sebastiano, the sun was nearing the horizon, so that they had not much time to give to their devotions in that church. They paused a moment to gaze at the stone bearing the mark of our Lord's foot when he appeared to St. Peter fleeing from the persecution at Rome. While they were considering it, a Capuchin Brother asked them if they would like to see the catacombs, and, lighting a candle, opened the door which led down to them. After seeing the place where the early Christians used to make their confessions, and another in which Mass was celebrated, they were shown the tomb where the body of Pope St. Marcellinus had been recently discovered. When they had passed through a few more galleries P. Muard made a sign that this was sufficient, for he knew it was getting late.

Returning to the light of day, which was fast declining, they hastened their steps to the pace of travellers who fear being benighted, for they had yet a long way to go. P. Muard, however, could not refrain from pausing awhile before the little sanctuary called Quo Vadis to explain to his companions its object, which was to commemorate the appearance, on this spot, of our Lord bearing his Cross to the Prince of the Apostles flying from Rome, when, in reply to St. Peter's question, "Domine, quo vadis?—(Lord, whither art thou going?)"—He replied, "To Rome to be crucified". The Apostle understood and returned. The chapel was closed, so they could not enter it. They pressed on again through the deserted lands, but the night was dark and they were ignorant of the road. P. Muard's tender regard for the health of his two

disciples is shown in his stopping at the hotel in the Piazza of St. John Lateran in consideration of their great fatigue, in order to provide them with a more substantial supper, although the novena fast on bread, water, and fruit was not yet terminated. They then accomplished the rest of the way to their own *locanda*, where they arrived at nine o'clock, exhausted with fatigue and having effected nothing. They had, indeed, been on foot well-nigh the whole day, but the depressing influence of the air of the Campagna, added to disappointment, had probably its share in causing this unusual exhaustion. P. Muard, it may be said, was never disappointed, in the common sense of the word, so united was he to the will of God. However, he did not resume any search the next day, but, after saying his Mass, as usual, at Sant' Andrea della Valle, remained at home engaged in earnest prayer for light and help; sending the others out to make their accustomed devotional excursions at pleasure, excursions for which Rome offers so wide and abundant a field.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Reception at Subiaco. San Lorenzo.

On Monday the 9th of October, P. Muard said his Mass at Sant' Andrea della Valle, but sent his associates to St. Peter's, where P. Benoit said his Mass. The two then waited for their friends the architects, who were punctual to the appointment, and in their company they visited the Museums of the Vatican, and ascended the Cupola of St. Peter's. When they were taking leave of them and expressing their thanks

they received a fresh invitation. "We are going," they said, "on Wednesday to visit Subiaco. There are some fine views there which strangers like to see; if you will go with us it will give us much pleasure. We shall engage places in the conveyance which takes people as far as the town." P. Benoit and his companion, however, said that they were unable to give any decisive reply until they had consulted their superior, but an answer should be sent on the morrow. On their return they hastened to acquaint P. Muard with the invitation they had received to visit Subiaco in company with their friends the architects. P. Muard immediately opened the Guide-Book which he had purchased when passing through Avignon, and turned to the account of Subiaco. There he read, "A celebrated place, where St. Benedict, while yet a youth, sanctified himself". He had read enough, but he said nothing.

In the course of the day he wrote a short note which he gave to P. Benoit to take to the Minerva Hotel along with the book which he had borrowed from his friends, thanking them for their invitation, but begging them not to reckon upon them for joining their expedition. A tourist party, indeed, would not have harmonized at all with the Father's notions or habits, but, although he had declined this proposal, he by no means rejected the idea of visiting the cradle and school of the great St. Benedict's sanctity. The name *Subiaco* seemed to sink deep into his mind, but he was not accustomed to talk things over, still less to resolve on any step without seeking counsel of the Lord. The next morning they said their Masses at the Gesù. P. Muard offered his at the altar of St. Aloysius Gonzaga, but went to make his thanksgiving at that of the Sacred

Heart. There he thus addressed our Lord: "A good father loves his children and can never abandon them. We are Thy children, therefore Thou canst not abandon us." Immediately after uttering this pious syllogism, he felt moved to make a pilgrimage to Subiaco and its environs. So he told his companions on his return. "Perhaps," he said, "we may there find some spot where we can begin our new life." Preparations did not occupy much time with our pilgrims. In fact, they appear to have taken nothing with them save their Breviaries, leaving their bags with Dame Patriarcha, and begging her, during their absence, to wash a little linen which they contained, for as yet they had no plan, or, rather, their leader had none, of remaining at Subiaco.

They did not set off for Tivoli until eleven o'clock in the day, imagining the distance to be less than it was, so that, when we remember their practice of paying their devotions in many of the churches on their road, we cannot be surprised that it was late before they arrived. There was in this case Santa Maria Maggiore to visit, in order to place their pilgrimage under the protection of our Lady. After this P. Muard remained a considerable time in the Church of San Lorenzo *fuori le mura*, beseeching the favour of that great saint and martyr. The road, besides, was extremely hilly. Of this the Father, well used to pedestrian excursions, as we have seen, was ordinarily little sensible, but this day he not only felt it but complained of it, which was a still more unusual circumstance. "I know not how it is," he kept saying; "but my legs are like two sticks;" and it was very plain that he had the greatest difficulty in moving them. "Never in all my life," he told his companions, "was I so fatigued as I

am to-day." P. Benoit considers that this was the work of the devil, who, bent on thwarting the good work which P. Muard had undertaken, did not like to see him directing his steps towards Subiaco, where he had reason to think he would find the term of his labours.

After three or four hours' toilsome walking they began to perceive a most disagreeable smell; in proportion as they advanced it became worse, and in the same proportion the surrounding land was uncultivated. Then P. Muard, whose mind always passed on from the things of sense to those of the spirit, made the following remark: "I would rather walk all my life long on my head than go to Hell. This stench, of which you will presently know the cause, is nothing to what the damned smell, and shall smell for ever, in the place of eternal punishment." The cause was soon patent, namely, the exhalations from some mineral water which, for a considerable distance, bordered the road. P. Muard continued aloud his meditation on Hell, and ended in saying, "No, I will not go to Hell. I am prepared to make every sacrifice to avoid that." By and by, after crossing the Anio, little guessing that they were to have nearly four months' acquaintance with its stream flowing at their feet in the peaceful hermitage which it would be their lot to inhabit, they slowly ascended the hill upon which Tivoli stands, but it was growing too dark for them to see the surrounding beauties of scenery in detail. Indeed, their great desire at present was to get to their journey's end. They were all tired; but "you would have supposed," says P. Benoit, "had you looked at our pious Founder, that all the demons in hell were at work to hinder his arrival".

They went to the Hotel della Sybilla near the cascades, and P. Muard, to chastise his poor body for its rebellion on the way, laid it out for repose on his usual couch of chairs. They were off at five o'clock the next morning, after pausing awhile to contemplate the magnificent falls of the Anio, which river heretofore formed the lake that gave its name to Subiaco (Sublacum), and at that moment was sparkling in the light of the rising sun. They then proceeded in silence, making their meditation. About nine o'clock they reached Vicovaro, where St. Benedict (as St. Gregory the Great relates), before founding his own Order, governed for a short time a community, who attempted to take his life by poison. Anxious to say Mass, they asked permission of the priest of the place, who readily granted it, but, as P. Benoit did not know what was the office for the day, having no *Ordo* with him, he asked the Curé to lend him his. P. Muard's caution is manifested in his having found fault with his follower after Mass for having been too explicit in exposing his ignorance. "That good priest," he said, "might have mistaken us for priests who were unacquainted with what they ought to do, and have withdrawn his permission."

After saying their Masses they again took the road to Subiaco. Just outside Vicovaro they saw an *osteria*, as it styled itself, but which was not above the rank of a common tavern, where they stopped to have breakfast. Some little fish caught in the Anio were served up, but fried in so nauseous a sauce as to be almost too much even for P. Muard himself, who by no means indulged in nicety as to the cookery of what was set before him. Besides this abominable dish there was only dry bread, and such bread! They were glad to escape from this filthy place, which, P. Benoit said,

lacked but the presence of St. Anthony's companion to be a veritable stye. They were soon on their road to Subiaco once more, distant still above twenty-one miles. It was about midday, and they already felt fatigue stealing over them. The road, however, was pleasant, and they said their office as they went along. When they had finished they saw some peasants gathering grapes in a vineyard, and P. Muard sent the Brother to buy some bunches from them, to make amends for their not very agreeable breakfast. "You may have seen," he said, "that cleanliness is not the predominant virtue of Italian women." The beautiful golden grapes which they ate with their remaining morsel of bread made them speedily forget the fried fish of Vicovaro. They also slaked their thirst at a fountain of pure water by the roadside. and were able to continue their journey somewhat refreshed. To beguile the length of the way they talked of the Foreign Missions, and compared the trifles they had to suffer with what the missionaries have to endure, journeying in pathless regions. exposed to the risk of losing their way, and having often to pass the night, without shelter or defence, in forests tenanted by wild beasts.

At seven o'clock they entered Subiaco; not very well seeing whither they were going, for night had set in. Following the course of the main street they arrived in front of the principal church of the place, which they entered, and joined in prayer with a number of persons engaged in making a public novena. When these devotions were over P. Muard found on enquiry that they had to retrace their steps to the *osteria* to which he desired to go, being the rendezvous of French artists. Here they were fortunate enough to find some painters from Lyons, who had come to take views in that

picturesque neighbourhood. The wife of one of them was an Italian, who, being able to talk French, offered herself as interpreter with the innkeeper. An excellent dish of maccaroni was soon on the table, and "better cooked than our morning's breakfast," says the narrator. They all did justice to the meal, including the Father, for they were really hungry. While they were eating he frankly acquainted his countrymen with his purpose. He and his companions, he said, had come to Italy to train themselves for the religious life, and he should be glad if he could find among the adjoining hills a spot where they could remain. The artists told him that at the Benedictine Monastery, in the Sacro Speco, there was an excellent abbot who could speak French well, and who would probably be able to provide them with what they sought, for they knew he owned some solitary spots among the mountains surrounding his monastery. When they retired to rest the Father, as usual, arranged his four chairs. When he had lain down P. Benoit took a counterpane off one of the beds and wrapped him in it, for the night was cold. As he was spreading it over him he told him he was twenty-eight years old on that very day, and he hoped that twenty-eight years hence P. Muard might still be reposing on his chairs and he be with him to lay a covering over him. Alas! the hope was not to be fulfilled, for, as he touchingly remarks—he is writing in 1878—"the twenty-eight years have passed, and already many have elapsed since our pious Founder was amongst us. He is gone to Heaven to enjoy eternal happiness, where he is so powerful that miraculous cures obtained by his intercession are attributed to him, while I am still in this miserable land of exile, writing down what passed, during our journey to Subiaco, at

the hotel where we met the French artists. We must will what God wills, and await with patience the hour of release."

The next morning, Friday the 13th of October, they went to say their Masses at the church of St. Scholastica, which ranked as a cathedral, the Pope being its titular. They then went back to Subiaco to take some refreshment—bread and water—which seems, indeed, to have been breakfast and dinner in one. In the afternoon they set out for the Benedictine abbey, stopping on the way at St. Scholastica's to beg the intercession of the glorious St. Benedict's sainted sister; after which they ascended to the Sacro Speco. P. Muard, in one of his letters to Pontigny, describes the situation of this marvellous sanctuary where St. Benedict passed his early years, hidden from all eyes, as the most curious imaginable: "not surrounded by walls," he says, "yet inaccessible, for it is begirt with rocks and precipices". The religious were saying office when the party arrived. At its conclusion, they saw them descend to the Grotto of St. Benedict to chant, as was their custom, the hymn *Laudibus cives* in honour of that great Saint. Our pilgrims awaited their return in the church. By and by they came; the Abbot passed on, and P. Muard followed him. After saluting him respectfully and kissing his ring he presented his *celebret*. The Secretary-General of the Archbishop of Sens had, to his no small annoyance, added his title of superior, for he desired nothing which savoured of the human to interfere in relation to the dealings of Divine Providence with him.

The Abbot conducted them to his cell, and here P. Muard frankly explained the object of his visit, and the design he had in view. Strange to say,—indeed,

it seemed strange to the Abbot Defazy himself, as he stated in a letter written to the Pierre-qui-Vire after P. Muard's death—he received this communication without a moment's doubt or hesitation. "I seemed to see," he said, "quite special circumstances in the arrival of P. Muard at St. Benedict's; accordingly I felt no mistrust, a feeling never absent from a superior's mind, if he has any experience of the world, when he is addressed by one who announces that he wishes to found a community; not an objection, not an observation fell from my lips or entered my thoughts. As he passed into my cell all his convictions appeared to pass into my soul. This is about what he said to me: 'I am member of a missionary body established at Pontigny. Ordinary means no longer suffice in France, extraordinary means are needed, in order to strike minds and draw hearts to conversion; they must be offered the example of a life poor, humble, and mortified. Grant me, Reverend Father, some grotto in your vicinity where, with my two companions, I may do penance and prepare myself for God's work.'" Without a moment's pause for reflection, the Abbot replied that he had, he believed, what would suit him; for at about a mile and a half distance they owned a very venerable spot, which was dear to St. Benedict and where he established one of the twelve monasteries which he founded in those parts. The monastery no longer existed, but in its place there still remained a hermitage, which had been sanctified by the austerities of a holy penitent of their Order in the 12th century, San Lorenzo di Fanello. In a grotto now forming its chapel St. Benedict had received many special favours, among others, a visit from the Blessed Virgin and the angels. "You will be there," he said, "in a perfect

solitude; and, if the place should suit you, it shall be at your disposal. Be at rest; you will find that you have not to deal with a Turk." As it may be imagined, his offer was gratefully accepted and a Brother was charged to conduct them to view the place. Him they followed, but not before they had devoutly visited the grotto of St. Benedict to return their heartfelt thanks.

A path among these wild hills led to the hermitage, but ere reaching it even this path almost entirely disappeared. There was a good-sized cottage near to the building which was occupied by the man who during the summer months tended the goats belonging to the monastery, but he, with his flock and his dogs, was about to remove in a few days to pitch his tent elsewhere during the winter. There was a garden also, which the gardener in charge of the hermitage had usually let at a low rent, but he was very glad to accept a few francs which P. Muard gave him, and to depart also, leaving it in the undisputed possession of the newcomers. This solitude was all that P. Muard could have desired, or his imagination have conceived. It satisfied every religious instinct of his soul, and we might say, if the expression be allowable, every spiritual taste, for he was in heart a true son of St. Benedict, though hitherto he had not been conscious of it, and, if St. Francis had rejected him, it was only because he well knew that another saint had a previous claim upon him. P. Muard belonged truly to that great family which, both materially and spiritually, has caused the wilderness in so many places to blossom as the rose, and he was to find his place and home in its bosom.

They met the Abbot on their way back; he was anxious to know how the spot suited them. "It is all

we could desire," answered the Father, heartily thanking him for his kindness. How much this retreat pleased him may be gathered also from the description which he wrote to his former children at Pontigny: "Imagine to yourselves a perpendicular rock a hundred and fifty feet high, with enormous buttresses projecting in several parts, and below the rock an abyss from eight to nine hundred feet deep, at the bottom of which a rapid torrent rushes along. It is below the rock and above the precipice that our hermitage is situated, so that it seems to cling to the face of the cliff, like a lark's nest." It was, in fact, built against the rock, which formed its back wall. In it was a chapel, the same in which an angel revealed to St. Benedict the destinies of his Order in future ages; and at one end of the house was a small grotto in which Mass could be said. It was here that the Blessed Lorenzo di Fanello sanctified himself by extraordinary austerities, the details of which, as preserved by tradition, would sound almost incredible. To its many advantages this retreat added, as P. Muard observes, that of "a tolerably spacious garden, which the good religious of old times, had, so to say, suspended over the abyss, and whence the view extends far away over forests and mountains; finally, a fountain of excellent water, which St. Benedict by his prayers caused to issue from the rock. Such is the place which this good Father has placed at our disposal. Judge how happy we were to find at last so profound a retreat, removed from all communication with men, where we are free to live as we wish. We thanked the good God with all our hearts, and the very next morning we entered on possession." The Abbot provided them with all that was required for saying Mass, and sent them counter-

panes for their beds. The hermitage already contained such small amount of furniture as they needed, which was little enough; and they bought their own cooking apparatus, which, as may be supposed, was not elaborate, together with a few plates.

Connected with this purchase a little misadventure occurred, which, as it serves to exhibit the spirit of P. Muard, we must not omit to mention. On the Saturday morning he had sent the Brother to buy the articles in question, he and P. Benoit setting out for the hermitage at about three o'clock in the afternoon in the expectation that the Brother would soon overtake them, and purposing to wait for him further on. When they had reached a little esplanade which commanded a view of the road, they made a halt. "Let us wait here a minute," said the Father, "and then we can aid him in carrying up the things." But an hour passed, and still the Brother, whom they had supposed to be close upon their steps, did not appear. P. Muard then resolved to go on himself to the Sacro Speco and from thence to the hermitage, sending P. Benoit back to meet the Brother, and help him with his burden. He would himself, he said, get some candles at St. Benedict's on the way, and P. Benoit was to bring the wine which they would need for Mass. The latter retraced his steps, and after a while found Brother Maurus sitting by the roadside, quite overcome and weeping. He encouraged him to rise, as night was coming on apace, and they had a considerable ascent to make before reaching San Lorenzo di Fanello. Relieved of half his load, the good Brother now bestirred himself, and they both proceeded with all possible speed to the Sacro Speco, but only to find the monastery closed for the night. They knocked, but no one came to

open; they called, but no one replied. What was to be done? They did not know as yet how to reach the hermitage without passing through the monastery, so nothing remained but to return to sleep at St. Scholastica's; and, as it seemed a pity to carry down their heavy load and have to fetch it up again the next morning, they hid it as well as they could inside a wooden trellis placed round one of the young trees on the esplanade outside as a protection from the goats. Unfortunately they found St. Scholastica's convent also closed, so, after all, they had to go back and sleep at the hotel at Subiaco.

Early the next morning, which was Sunday, they were on foot again, but when they reached the *cache* they had devised for their treasure, they discovered that half of it had disappeared. However, taking what remained and the wine for Mass as they passed through the monastery, they pursued their way. They now learned what they previously were not aware of, that there was a path below, between the Sacro Speco and the Anio, sufficiently wide to admit a single person, by which they could have reached the hermitage. They met P. Muard at the door, and P. Benoit related to him how, finding themselves shut out from both St. Benedict's and St. Scholastica's monasteries, they had been obliged to return to the hotel, where they had expended the sum of two francs. Moreover, half their yesterday's purchase had vanished. P. Muard answered with his habitual calmness, "Those who have taken the things were, no doubt, in great need of them". Such was his view of the matter. "And were you not disquieted, Reverend Father," asked P. Benoit, "when we did not arrive?" "No, I placed all in the hands of our Lord, and spent part of the night in prayer, as was

fitting." They were about to say matins when three or four shepherds made their appearance hoping to hear Mass. "Charity before all things," said the Father; "let us offer our Masses, and say our office afterwards." The scene was sweet and touching to their hearts, recalling as it did the remembrance of the Stable of Bethlehem. After saying office and partaking of their frugal dinner, they visited the fountain which St. Benedict caused to issue from the rock, to relieve his religious from having to descend so great a depth to the bed of the Anio, where it rushes along hemmed in between these gigantic rocks. On their return, they sang vespers. This was the first night they spent together in the hermitage.

The building consisted of three rooms, in addition to the two chapels. The central compartment was provided with a furnace, and served, of course, as their kitchen. On the left was a room, not a very spacious one, in which P. Benoit and Brother Maurus slept. Besides the quilts, the Abbot had sent a palliasse, which was probably designed for the Superior. The Superior, as we may guess, would have none of it, so it fell to the share of P. Benoit, who very simply observes that nature willingly submitted, and gratefully accepted what obedience assigned to him. The Brother had some planks a little raised above the floor, where, wrapped in his counterpane, he very contentedly took his repose. On the right and over the chapel was the largest room in the house. It contained some chairs and a table, and served our recluses for many purposes. It was their hall of study and their dining-room. There also they held their conferences and their chapter, and received any stranger who might visit them. P. Muard also slept there. He had a bed according to

his own heart, composed of planks laid over some iron trestles, placed by him every evening against the wall of the room, which in fact was the bare rock; and upon this couch he passed, as he said, the happiest nights, rising a little before three o'clock to call his companions. At three o'clock punctually they all repaired to the little grotto of San Lorenzo, where they chanted the *Veni Creator* to implore the light of the Holy Spirit and strength to sanctify the day. P. Muard had another motive for this practice, considering it a powerful aid towards conquering the drowsiness which on first rising is not always speedily shaken off. He had so completely subdued his own nature by fasts and vigils that the allotted time for sleep was more than he needed. "What do you do," asked P. Benoit one day, "when you lie awake?" "I pray," was the reply; "and when I am tired of praying, I build, in thought, our future monastery."

They could not feel settled, however, until they had fetched their small amount of goods, which, it will be remembered, they had left in charge of Dame Patriarcha. Accordingly, on the Monday morning, P. Muard, accompanied by Brother Maurus, returned to Rome. They were absent four days, as they found that the dame had not yet washed their clothes, which caused a delay. We now incidentally learn what was the amount of their wardrobe at this time. They had each of them two shirts, two pairs of stockings, and some pocket handkerchiefs. These, with a few books, constituted the whole of their worldly property. On their way back P. Muard and his companion were caught during their night walk between Tivoli and Vicovaro in a drenching storm of rain, a subject of rejoicing to the Father, as inconveniences and discomforts invariably

were. He proposed to say the whole rosary to obtain the protection of their holy Mother, and thus they trudged on until they reached Vicovaro, where a charitable widow, on the parish priest's recommendation, took them in. She had just lost her husband, and related all her sorrows to P. Muard in Italian, who, in reply, offered her his consolations in French. As neither of them was acquainted with the language of the other, Brother Maurus was amazed at perceiving how well they seemed to understand each other. The next morning the Father offered his Mass for the repose of the soul of their kind hostess' husband, and they then proceeded on their road, reaching San Lorenzo di Fanello at night-fall. During their absence P. Benoit had daily said his Mass at the Sacro Speco, where the Abbot had given him his breakfast, and the benefit of his company while eating it. His first attempts at cooking himself a dinner seem to have been eminently unsuccessful, for he had to bestow the rice which he had prepared on the dogs and goats, who did not object to the salt with which it was saturated. The three hermits all rejoiced to to be once more united, and to be able now to begin their regular life without interruption.

CHAPTER XIX.

Life in the Hermitage.

Thus far we have followed day by day the steps of our pilgrims until their leader had found at last the object of his search, a perfect solitude, the "hole in the rock," the dove's nest on high, where for above three

months he was to brood in peace over divine things and prepare his future work. Each had his special department. Brother Maurus was the provider for temporal needs, buying in Subiaco the vegetables and bread which formed their sustenance, cutting wood in the forest, for which they had received permission, and cooking the dinner. P. Benoit studied theology; P. Muard applied himself to composing his constitutions. But, although his two followers had manifested unswerving fidelity to their resolution of accompanying him and had accepted his guidance without question, P. Muard could not feel thoroughly satisfied without causing them to pass through the exercises of an eight days' retreat according to the method of St. Ignatius, in order to make sure of the firmness of their vocation. When the day of election arrived he endeavoured to place them in the state of indifference recommended by the saint, that they might know the will of God in their regard. That was to be their one object, and no human consideration was to be allowed entrance into their minds. He then told them both that they were still perfectly free to retire and to return to France, and, if such should be the decision they were led to make, he would furnish them with means for the journey. "Act then," he said, "with the most entire liberty." After addressing these few words to them he sent them into the chapel, to beg our Lord to give them light to know their vocation. "After half an hour spent at the foot of the altar," says P. Benoit, "praying as earnestly as I could, I returned to tell him that my dispositions were precisely the same; no change had taken place in me, and that I desired to follow him for life and to death." He then went back to the chapel, and Brother Maurus in his turn came to tell P. Muard his election, which

was entirely conformable to that of P. Benoit. Thus was the affair irrevocably concluded. P. Muard told them that while they had been in the chapel he had entreated our Lord to leave their minds perfectly free and undisturbed, so that they might make their choice with the greatest calmness and in the plenitude of peace. "Give me, Lord," he said, "all the interior pains which would have accompanied their election," and his prayer was granted, for, while they were praying in complete tranquillity, he suffered much anguish of spirit. No doubt, recalling to mind what he had endured at Piffonds, his tender charity made him willing to drink anew of the bitter draught, rather than that his beloved disciples should taste one drop of it.

The retreat closed on the festival of All Saints, when they joyfully sang their *Te Deum*, the two priests renewing their sacerdotal, and Brother Maurus his baptismal, vows. Their Masses were attended only by poor shepherds, who were keeping watch over their flocks among these solitary hills. The next day, the commemoration of the faithful departed, when P. Muard was at the foot of the altar about to offer Mass he beheld in spirit the souls of his deceased parishioners at Joux-la-Ville and St. Martin d'Avallon, who presented themselves to him beseeching him to think of them. He remembered them all, and was convinced that many had the happiness of entering Heaven that very day. Studies now were systematically begun. P. Muard had brought with him all that he had already written with regard to his projected monastic life. He proceeded to give it a careful reviewal, and told P. Benoit one day that he had not set down one word without previous prayer. All, in fact, was the result of prayer, and of that alone, for he had neither copied nor

adapted anything from external sources, and with the Rule of St. Benedict in particular he was as yet quite unacquainted. It was now for the first time to come under his notice.

The Abbot had conceived a singular affection for him, and after the conclusion of the retreat often came up to the hermitage, to hold converse with him. P. Muard, on his part, was glad to be able to confer with him and to show him what he had commenced writing concerning his future congregation. The Rule of St. Benedict was now lent to him by the Abbot. He read and re-read it with the deepest interest, taking it even with him when during his recreation time he wandered in the woods. He studied it and meditated upon it chapter by chapter, and felt more and more convinced that he had found precisely what he needed, for he had been most desirous to discover a rule ready made to his hand, and requiring only such slight modifications as should adapt it to his special purpose. With this object he had recently borrowed the Rule of St. Francis of Assisi from the Capuchins at Subiaco, but had found little in it which he was disposed to take. It was not so with the Rule of St. Benedict. From this rule he extracted entire chapters, as may be seen in his Constitutions, making only such subordinate changes as his plan seemed to need, his leading idea having ever been to combine militant apostolic life with the contemplative. Whatever did not suit his purpose, therefore, he left on one side, as, for instance, in the matter of psalmody and the Breviary ; and his reason for so doing is obvious. He wished to retain the Roman Breviary in order to keep himself in perfect union with the entire Church.

The Abbot Defazy's account of these things, embodied in some statements made after P. Muard's death, will

be of interest. His difficulty, he said, consisted in the choice of a rule. He was, in the first instance, in suspense between that of St. Benedict and of St. Francis, for which latter he had a certain inclination, and the Abbot thought well to leave him to himself for a couple of days that he might reflect and ask light from God as to which of these saints he was to choose for his Patriarch. While feeling this attraction towards the Franciscan Order, he also loved the Benedictines, who had done so much good in his own country, and left behind them so many memorials of themselves. But he doubted whether it was possible to employ in missionary work religious subjected to the precept of the Benedictine rule. This was a mistake, the Abbot said. It was sufficient for them to act from obedience. P. Muard knew that the Franciscans gave missions, while he had never seen any Benedictine missionaries. Certainly there had been none in France since the Revolution, with the exception of some religious of Solesme, with which circumstance the Abbot thought he was probably unacquainted. He knew and loved the Trappists, but they did not preach. Yet were their Abbot, with the approbation of the Ordinary, to command any of his religious fitted for the work to go and preach, they would be bound to do so, for the spirit of St. Benedict's rule is obedience. His rule is, moreover, the severest of all, imposing on the religious the obligation of labouring at tilling the ground and other manual work in connection therewith.* St. Benedict leaves less individual liberty to his sons than do other founders, declaring that it is not lawful for them to

* Quia tunc vere monachi sunt, si labore manuum suarum vivunt, sicut et patres nostri et Apostoli. *Reg. S. P. Benedicti*, cap. xlviii.

retain either their bodies or their wills in their own power.* He went on to say that the saint shows his zeal for announcing the word of God, even from the time when he was living in his grotto. The shepherds visited him there, as did also the inhabitants of the surrounding districts, and he taught them the doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ. He converted them and disposed them "*ad pietatis gratiam*—to the grace of piety". The people delighted in listening to him. He also preached at Monte Cassino, and converted the idolaters who were numerous in that neighbourhood. St. Gregory has recorded this in his Dialogues. "In fact," said the Abbot Defazy, "our Fathers were the great missionaries of Europe. Of this truth we must be thoroughly convinced; the whole history of the middle ages bears testimony to it." After recommending him to ponder it well, the Abbot gave P. Muard St. Benedict's Rule to study. We have already seen the admiration it excited in him, and how it unexpectedly fulfilled his every desire.

We may here quote what he himself writes at this time to the Pontigny Fathers. "Providence, in leading us to this holy place, had its reasons of which we were ignorant, but of which we now adore the sovereign wisdom. It was needful for us, not only to consult the Divine Will, but also thoroughly to study the religious life. We must become true religious, and for that end spiritual aid and, above all, a rule adapted to our object became a necessity. Now, the good God has given us in the Reverend Abbot of St. Benedict a true father; he entertains an affection for us which might make his own religious jealous. Not a week

* Quippe quibus nec corpora sua nec voluntates licet habere in propria potestate. Cap. xxxiii.

passes but he pays us several visits, in spite of the length of way and steepness of the ascent between his monastery and our hermitage. He has placed at our service his experience, his good will, and even his purse. As he speaks French perfectly,* he is of great use, as regards our initiation into the government of a religious house, and offers to do anything for us at the Court of Rome which may be found necessary. God has provided for us, moreover, in the code of St. Benedict a rule which adapts itself perfectly to the kind of life which we wish to lead; so that, with the introduction of a few minor changes, we shall find in it all that we can desire. It is generally reckoned to be the most perfect of all, the richest in detail and the most fruitful, adapting itself wonderfully to all the ends of the religious life; so is it also the well-spring whence founders of Orders have continually come to draw ever since the days of St. Benedict.†

"The principal alterations which, I believe, I must introduce, are to render the fast a little less severe than is prescribed, and as a compensation, the abstinence stricter; the other modifications would take me too long to detail here; later you will see the work on which I am engaged, and which occupies my whole time, for I will not return to France without having a fixed rule and constitutions drawn up, so far as is possible. We shall say to those

* The Abbot Defazy, it will be observed, is always mentioned as speaking French perfectly well. This might convey the impression that he was not a Frenchman, which by extraction he certainly was. He came from the neighbourhood of Briançon, but his whole ecclesiastical life had been spent in Italy.

† Further testimonies to P. Muard's admiration of this ancient and venerable rule will be found in quotations from the Introduction to his own rule which are given later.

who are minded to join us, 'Take, read, reflect, and see what God will give you the strength to do; it is before you either to accept or lay aside'. For the rest, this rule will not be my work, since it is that of St. Benedict, and the explanations added are partly extracted from the best constitutions af different religious Orders which have adopted that rule for their basis."

P. Muard's rule, in fact, was ultimately to be perfectly approximated to that of St. Benedict,* but this was to be after his death, when his constitutions and rule were submitted for approval at Rome. Suffice it to notice at present that the primitive rule of St. Benedict allowed only a single meal during the day, from the 14th of September until Easter. This appeared to him to be too rigorous a fast in our nothern climate during winter, and, moreover, he thought that at all seasons it might be found impracticable by missionaries in the midst of their laborious ministry; so that he considered it would be better to mitigate this fast, by permitting a collation in the evening, so as to render its observance possible for all.

So far no exception could or would have been taken to his rule, but, as a compensation, he had rendered the abstinence stricter; for, whereas the rule of St. Benedict permitted all that is comprised under the term *meagre* diet, he would allow only bread, vegetables, and fruit, with pure water as the sole beverage. From the Father Abbot, who was also his confessor, P. Muard concealed nothing. Not only did he show him all that he had written of his rule and constitutions, but he laid before him all the papers wherein he had recorded the graces, favours, and communications he had received from our Lord, and this for the purpose of convincing him that

* See concluding chapter.

he could at present change nothing in the rule of life he had laid down. While cordially approving in substance all he read, the Abbot continued to maintain a very definite opinion as to its rigour in some respects. He was thoroughly acquainted with the religious life, and also knew well the practice of the Holy See in the matter of new foundations. "I admit," he said, "the force of all you say, and believe it, but the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars will think otherwise; you may be sure of that. It will not approve your constitutions, as they stand; neither can it, for this would be to destroy your infant work; it will consider them as too severe for a whole community." P. Muard gratefully accepted all the observations made by the Father Abbot, in whom he placed the highest confidence. Nevertheless, his own opinion remained unchanged. This was from no obstinate attachment to his individual judgment, but he did not venture, even in compliance with the most valued advice, to change one jot or tittle of what he believed our Lord had approved. His work was in God's hands to do with it what seemed good in His eyes, or to undo it, if so He willed; but he would not himself lay a finger upon it either to add or take from it. This, under present circumstances at least, was a simple impossibility to him.

It will be sufficient to have said thus much on the subject in the biography of this holy man. The question was never solved until after his death, and in a manner which proved the correctness of the Abbot Defazy's anticipations. May we not, however, piously believe that P. Muard acted purely according to the light he had received, of which we see he had the fullest conviction, and that our Lord directly willed both the austere beginnings of the community and the sub-

sequent modifications which Rome in her prudence thought fit to make in a rule the stringency of which would, especially as time went on and the example of the great founder was withdrawn, have proved an obstacle to the multiplication of vocations and hence to the practical object of extensive missionary work. Upon another point P. Muard also felt strongly. He did not wish his community to have any possessions, in order to prevent their becoming attached to this or that spot. The Benedictine-Preachers, he would say, must be like soldiers, always ready to go whithersoever they may be sent. Our little society has a work to do in these latter days; therefore it must be able to transport itself to wherever it may be most needed. In conformity with this resolution, when the site at the Pierre-qui-Vire was offered to him as a gift, he would not accept it purely as such, but consented only to a long lease of ninety-nine years.*

Let us now see how P. Muard expresses himself in the same letter concerning the life which he and his companions led at San Lorenzo di Fanello, and his own peace of soul. "When I examine," he writes, "all that has passed with reference to this vocation which God has given me, and what is taking place now, I see as clear as the day that I have simply followed the invisible hand which was guiding me. I enjoy also an interior peace which is indescribable. I feel that I am where God wills me to be, and I often exclaim, 'Oh, how happy one is with the certainty of doing the will of God!' But wherefore has He chosen for His work a being so miserable, so unworthy, so incapable as I am? I know not. This is His secret,

* This prohibition of possessing property was removed by the Holy See.

which I adore. I place myself tranquilly at the disposal of His Divine Will, and in nowise disquiet myself about the future, as to whether this undertaking shall succeed or not succeed. I do not concern myself; I am in a state of absolute indifference on this point; I allow myself to be led by Providence, as a little child is led by its mother; without solicitude or care. I have but one desire, and that is to employ well the precious time which I am free to use, a time pre-eminently of grace. Oh, what a delicious thing is solitude, and how true is that saying of the Divine Spouse: *Et ducam eam in solitudinem; et loquor ad cor ejus*! * What sweet, what ineffable words God speaks to the soul; what light He bestows; how He makes us love humility, and even humiliations; how He inspires a taste for prayer and mortification! O beloved solitude, I shall never forget thee, any more than I shall forget the sentiments with which thou fillest my soul! But let us come to the details which you ask for.

"Here is the order of our day's exercises. We rise at three in the morning; our couch never detains us; on the contrary, we are always glad to leave it, for, as it is composed of planks, with one or two coverings, when we have reclined six hours and a half we have had enough of it. At ten minutes after three we go and say matins in the chapel; after matins meditation, prime, and the community Mass. Immediately after Mass, we say sext, and proceed to our work until half-past eleven. We then say none, after which follows the particular examen. At twelve o'clock we sit down to table, the dinner being only what simple necessity demands, and consisting of some soup and a dish of

* "And I will lead her into the wilderness, and I will speak to her heart."—Osee ii. 14.

vegetables, seasoned only with a little salt, for we abstain from oil and butter, still more from all flesh-meat. But, you will say, such a diet is unendurable. You are mistaken; it is excellent, and we eat our vegetables dressed with salt with more relish than men of the world partake of their most delicately served tables. But, to be candid, we must own to having a cook who knows how to make everything tasteful; that cook is hunger. And so every day is a fast with us. In the evening we make a collation out of a little fruit, or with the remains of the vegetables left from dinner, which we eat cold. Sometimes the collation consists only of dry bread. And now you will ask, how does this regimen agree with you? Wonderfully well, we never felt in such good health before, we are ourselves surprised at it.

"To complete what regards our mode of life: you must know that we always keep silence, not conversing even during recreation time, only speaking when it is necessary. But perhaps you will say, what a melancholy life you must lead! Not at all; we never were more happy. Oh, how well it is with those who are where the good God wills them to be; what peace is enjoyed by those who do His will! Our dear solitude is for us a veritable paradise, and we can truly say that these are the happiest days of our life. I no longer wonder at seeing the ancient anchorites so attached to their deserts, and so sedulously flying the company of men, after having once tasted the sweets of solitude."

With regard to the practice of silence in his new community, the subject was matter of deep reflection and earnest prayer with P. Muard before he finally came to a decision. Should they have times of recreation, in which conversation was allowed, as is the case

in most religious communities, or should they, like the Trappists, have free times but pass them in silence? He said to P. Benoit one day, when they were on their way to the Sacro Speco, "We are going this morning to begin a novena in honour of the Blessed Virgin, which we will conclude on the day of her Immaculate Conception. The Blessed Virgin must tell me what we are to do with regard to silence. We will descend to the grotto where is the altar of St. Benedict, and we will beseech that great saint, the friend of silence, to ask our Lord what we must establish respecting this matter, which is not as yet decided." They accordingly begged the Blessed Virgin to enlighten them as to what would be best for the glory of her Divine Son and for their salvation. On the 8th of December they again descended to the Sacro Speco, both to see the Abbot and to pray in St. Benedict's grotto. There P. Muard remained prostrate for a long time at the foot of the marble image of the saint, who used to retire to this cave to pray and to meditate on heavenly things. After paying the Abbot a brief visit they prepared to ascend the rock to their mountain hermitage, and they had scarcely crossed the threshold of the monastery when P. Muard, turning to his companion, said, "We shall have free times, but not what are called recreations. Each religious will take his walk apart, he can rest himself and unbend his mind, fatigued by study, either by prayer, contemplation, or reading." P. Muard, therefore, did not borrow his law of silence from La Trappe, for he had come to a determination on that point before he went to Aiguebelle, although the experience of his stay there only confirmed him in his resolution. The practice of silence was adopted by him and his companions while they were still at San

Lorenzo di Fanello; nevertheless they spoke without scruple when any necessity arose, and as yet they were unacquainted with the signs by which the Trappists are able on so many occasions to dispense with speech.

In mentioning this novena and the final decision to which it led, we have been anticipating the course of events to which we will now return. While P. Muard was leading a life of prayer, silence, and mortification in this wild solitude, Europe was being convulsed with revolution. Her capitals were the scenes of tumult and sanguinary conflict, her dethroned monarchs were flying for their lives, and the very foundations of social order menaced with destruction. Meanwhile he pursued his peaceful labour of preparing the constitutions of his future community, as one who is fashioning stones for the reconstruction of what others are labouring to pull down. Pride, cupidity, and sensuality, those great enemies of the perfection and felicity of man, were, indeed, as we have seen, what his work was specially designed to combat; and from whence do "wars and contentions" flow, as the Apostle St. James shows,* but from the indulgence of these very concupiscences? For a time, the throne of the Supreme Pontiff continued to stand erect, while those of ancient and powerful dynasties were being hurled to the ground; but this immunity could not last long, for the destruction of the Pope's temporal power, as a first step towards the annihilation of his spiritual dominion, was then, as ever, the central aim of the secret societies whose plottings had brought about all these democratic risings throughout the continent.

One day P. Benoit went down alone to Subiaco for

* St. James iv. 1.

a surgical operation, the excision of a small lump which had been lately growing on one of his knees. The young surgeon who operated had a smattering of French, which he had acquired during a fifteen months' study of his art at Paris. He had just heard with the utmost consternation of the murder of the Count di Rossi, the prime minister of Pius IX., and begged his patient to acquaint the Abbots of St. Scholastica and of St. Benedict with the sad news. This good young man refused all payment. "Pray for me," he said; "that is all I ask of you." On his way back to San Lorenzo P. Benoit called at the monastery of St. Scholastica to inform the Abbot, whom he left terrified at this horrible catastrophe, and then proceeded to fulfil his commission at the Sacro Speco. "Have you heard," asked the Abbot of St. Benedict, "if there has been a revolution at Rome?" His informant replied that all that was known at present was the assassination, on the previous day, of the Count di Rossi as he was mounting the steps which led to the Hall of the Assembly. There was at that moment an old bachelor, a great personage in point of rank, residing at the Sacro Speco. He had been seriously compromised in the late affairs of Naples, so that we cannot suppose that he was a very welcome guest at the Benedictine Abbey, where he boarded. "My old duke," said the Abbot to P. Benoit, "must know something of this, for I am persuaded that he belongs to the Carbonari: and, as he is in arrears in his rent, I shall take advantage of the circumstance to beg him to seek a place of retirement elsewhere." P. Benoit pursued his way to the hermitage. When P. Muard had heard the afflicting news he said, "We shall wait here to see what course things take, continuing the tenour of our life in our dear solitude. Our Lord,

who knows our intentions, will watch over us and preserve us from all evil." Soon the news reached Subiaco that the revolutionists were in possession of Rome, and the Pope a prisoner in the Quirinal. Prelates and members of the Papal Government were flying from the city, and two distinguished individuals arrived at this juncture at Santa Scolastica, Mgr. Morichini, the Archbishop of Nisibis, and Mgr. Morandi, a layman, godson to the Pope and Sub-governor of Rome. Hearing of the French occupants of San Lorenzo and interested, doubtless, by what they heard, they walked up to the hermitage one evening, quite unexpectedly, in company with the Abbot of St. Benedict. They went into the chapel, and P. Muard, who was engaged in study in the room above, came down immediately to ask for Mgr. Morichini's blessing. As the Abbot knew that these two great personages desired to visit, not the hermitage merely, but P. Muard personally, he suggested that they should go up to the room where the Father was in the habit of receiving his guests. When they had all been provided with chairs, Mgr. Morichini, who spoke French very well, entered upon tha subject of the mode of life which P. Muard and his companions were pursuing, and the object they had in view. P. Muard ventured to ask him how matters were going on at Rome, and learned from him that the Holy Father had been enabled happily to make his escape from the city and take refuge at Gaeta, where he was hospitably entertained by the King of Naples.

After some further conversation, and having visited the grotto where San Lorenzo sanctified himself by a life of rigid penance, Mgr. Morichini and his companions prepared to descend the hill. The Prelate took the arm of P. Muard, and during the whole walk

he talked to him with the open-heartedness and sympathy of a friend. It was plain that he had quite won the confidence of this future Prince of the Church, as time was afterwards to show. The honour of escorting the Sub-governor of Rome devolved on P. Benoit. Mgr. Morandi questioned him closely concerning their manner of life and their projects. All of a sudden he said, "I looked all round to see where that good priest's bed was but could not discover it. I saw, indeed, some iron trestles and planks propped up against the wall, and I imagine that he sleeps upon those planks." P. Benoit told him that so it was; that every night he arranged them and in the morning replaced them leaning against the rock. This surprised Mgr. Morandi a little, but, being a man of faith, he agreed that in the times in which they were living penance was indeed needed. The recluses left their visitors at the door of the Sacro Speco, but not before P. Muard had obtained from Mgr. Morichini his blessing on themselves and on their work, which he most willingly bestowed, promising to aid them in their enterprise, whenever he should be able, for he believed it was the work of God.

Mgr. Morichini remained at least three weeks at Santa Scolastica; and, on the two priests returning his visit, he behaved to them with the same kindness, renewing his promise of assistance when better times should come. There was, indeed, a remarkable graciousness in this distinguished prelate, for he extended his notice most amiably to the Lay-Brother who used to go down to Subiaco to buy provisions, and who met the Archbishop several times taking his evening walk in the vicinity of St. Scholastica's monastery. Mgr. Morichini would make him sit down by his side and have a pretty long

talk with him, either about P. Muard and his projected work, or about France. Monsignore only knew Brother Maurus's Christian name, having, no doubt, asked him what it was, so when he saw him coming he would call out, "Well, Maurice, how fares it with you?" and then he would enquire after P. Muard. Once, when P. Benoit had been sent down by the latter to procure him an *Ordo*, that he might be in entire accord with the diocese in all that concerned the Divine Offices, he found, as he was returning, the Archbishop and the Brother, the latter with his provision basket by him, sitting on the esplanade already mentioned, and having their usual familiar talk together. He stopped a minute to speak to the Archbishop and get his blessing, and, as the two left him, the good-natured prelate called out, "Good-bye, Maurice, till we meet when you next go to Subiaco".

The period of stay at San Lorenzo di Fanello was one of experiment. P. Muard was occupied in ascertaining what was desirable and what was possible to do, particularly in the way of fasting. Abstinence, as we know, with him and his companions was continual, and so, indeed, was the fasting, but the question was as to the degree to be adopted in point of quantity. During the whole of Advent he made but one meal, contenting himself with dinner, but he desired the others to have their evening collation, and used to go and pray in the chapel while they were eating it. His health did not appear to suffer from this severe regimen. A short time before Christmas they heard that Louis Napoleon had been elected President of the French Republic, and that the Comte de Falloux had been appointed Minister of Public Instruction and of Worship. "Some things," observed P. Muard, "are very astonishing. Who would

have thought that the Prince President would have selected a Catholic for his minister?". The great festival of Christmas was now at hand, and it was decided that they should say their midnight Masses, as was customary in France, little suspecting that being in Italy they were acting against rule, their chapel not being a public one, and, on the other hand, he and his associates not constituting a religious community. It was an involuntary fault, however, easily condoned by the Father Abbot when he became aware of the error. The little chapel of San Lorenzo where they each celebrated their three Masses must have seemed more appropriate for this touching festival than the most splendid cathedral. Its poverty, its being a cave in the rock, and its narrow dimensions combined to make it a vivid representation of the grotto of the Nativity; and to complete the likeness, even the shepherds were not wanting, of whom two or three were there to adore their Infant Saviour.

As the midnight hour struck, P. Muard began his Mass, the two others singing to the best of their ability by ear, for they had no written music with them. P. Benoit then said his three Masses, his Mass for the day being fixed for nine o'clock, and then P. Muard said his Aurora Mass and Mass for the day. It was during his last Mass, at the second memento, that he received another wonderful grace. Our Lord deigned once more to speak to him and give him a fresh and most consolatory re-assurance concerning the work to which He had called him. He dwelt strongly on five points. 1. He confirmed all that He had previously made known to him regarding this new society. 2. He told him how dear it was to Him. 3. He promised that it should flourish. 4. That it would be a school of martyrs and of confessors of the

faith for the time of His last coming. 5. That the members of this congregation, by whom He meant above all to designate the first, whom He had chosen as the foundations, must be saints, great saints; that such was His express will; and He repeated this several times, and always with increased emphasis. And upon P. Muard representing to the Divine Saviour his own unworthiness, his extreme weakness, and incapacity for all good, our Lord replied that He would give all the necessary graces; let them only confide in Him. Finally, He promised P. Muard a special personal favour or, rather, reiterated a promise which He had more than once made to him. On the following day our Lord gave him a fresh confirmatory promise of all these things. It was in the very grotto where St. Benedict received five special graces or precious privileges for his Order, and where the Blessed Lorenzo di Fanello did penance, that all this took place.

P. Muard wrote down the five promises which our Lord had vouchsafed to make to him, the very moment he had concluded his Mass, returning afterwards to offer his thanksgiving. "I was calm when beginning my Mass," he said; "my imagination was not in a state of activity." There was, indeed, nothing to be seen in him outwardly save the usual reflection on his countenance of the interior joy he felt at being able to unite himself more closely with our Lord in Holy Communion. After vespers P. Benoit having asked leave to go down to the Sacro Speco to see the Abbot, P. Muard permitted him, but made a point of his returning in time for a conference in the evening. When the hour arrived, and the three were gathered in the room where they were in the habit of holding them, a look of sadness was visible on the good

Father's face as he thus addressed them. "I know not whether I ought to read to you what our Lord communicated to me this morning at the second memento of the Mass for the day, but, if I tell you these things, it is because you are disposed to continue the work which we have begun, and it is therefore just that you should know the favours which our Lord has been pleased to grant me. But I make one condition, and that is that you should tell no one." He then knelt down, the very tone of his voice manifesting the sadness which had taken possession of his soul. This sadness had its source in his deep humility, for he said he could not comprehend that our Lord should any way regard him who was such a miserable being, and, above all, how He should employ him as an instrument in a work which required quite another sort of man to carry it out.

When he had related the graces he had received he rose, and they held their little conference. The next day he told them that he believed he had obtained a favour which he had long been soliciting from our Lord, the grace to die a martyr. He understood it of the martyrdom of blood, but God had accepted him as a martyr of charity.* After reading to his associates

* It must not surprise us to find the holiest soul thus misunderstanding what seemed a sure answer to prayer. Speaking of revelations, Boudon says in his *Régne de Dieu dans l'Oraison Mentale*, "there is a danger"—he means of misconception—"even when no doubt can exist as to revelations proceeding from the Spirit of God; not because they are not in themselves most certain, the Holy Spirit being Truth Itself, but on account of the application which the human spirit makes of them, putting a different construction on them to that intended by the Spirit of God. It was revealed to a holy person that he should be a martyr, but the Spirit of God was speaking of the martyrdom of love."—B. iv. c. iv.

the five graces which our Lord had accorded to the infant community, he placed the leaf on which he had written them amongst his memoranda of the others which in time past he had received, and which, it will be remembered, he had brought with him. His sudden death deprived him of the opportunity of destroying these papers; here, therefore, it was found among the rest and faithfully copied.

CHAPTER XX.

The Return Journey.

Mgr. Bighi, the Pope's Vicar at Santa Scolastica, came up early in January to say Mass in the grotto of San Lorenzo. P. Muard accompanied him on his return as far as the Sacro Speco, the Prelate leaning on his arm and speaking in Latin, although he understood French well when addressed to him. He dwelt on the woes which he foresaw for Italy and, particularly, for Rome. "*Timeo Deum et justitiam ejus,*" he said; "*sed spero in Beatam Mariam et in Galliam.*"* He pronounced these words slowly, and repeated them two or three times, emphasizing each syllable in a tone which bespoke his inward conviction that chastisements were hanging over Italy.

Mgr. Bighi was about to pay the Sovereign Pontiff a visit at Gaeta, and the Abbot of St. Benedict had already suggested to P. Muard that it would be an excellent opportunity for him to profit by so good an escort in order to seek his desired interview with the

* "I fear God and His justice," he said, "but I hope in Blessed Mary and in France."

Holy Father. P. Muard, who never resolved upon any step without consulting God in prayer, gave him no precise answer. Soon after Mgr. Bighi's visit the Abbot repeated his suggestion, telling P. Muard that the Prelate was preparing to set out, and would be happy to present him to the Sovereign Pontiff. He had already written in his favour, and the Pope's confessor, who was a friend of his, had replied that P. Muard would be promptly admitted to an audience. Still the latter did not positively accept the offer, though he did not decline it; and it was only when he received a few lines from the Abbot telling him that Mgr. Bighi had already commenced his journey and had left word at the Sacro Speco that he would wait for P. Muard to join him at a litle *borgo* which he named, at a short distance east of San Lorenzo, that he made up his mind. He said that he now saw that it was the will of God that he should go to Gaeta. P. Benoit was unfortunately not in a state to accompany him, as he was suffering from swelled feet; so he remained in charge of the hermitage, and the Father took Brother Maurus with him. It must have been a considerable disappointment to P. Benoit, but he bore it cheerfully, and moved his palliasse into the large room, where he had for company a number of rats, who sallied forth at night to regale themselves with some glue lately applied to stick paper over holes in the floor which had been stopped.

P. Muard had no passport, having left it with the Roman police, from whom he had obtained leave for six months' residence anywhere in the Pontifical States. But, thanks to Mgr. Bighi, he was able to cross the Neapolitan frontier. That prelate travelled on horseback, and wished to share this accommodation with

P. Muard by mounting turn about, but the Father declined the repeated charitable offers of the Bishop, assuring him that he was unaccustomed to riding. This, indeed, was true, yet no one can doubt but that his real motive was his preference for the penitential fatigue of walking, not to speak of the strong objection he would have felt to being mounted while the Bishop was on foot. At San Germano the Governor refused to allow him to proceed on account of the lack of passport, and he and the Brother were sent to the monastery of Monte Cassino. Nothing could have pleased P. Muard more than a visit to that celebrated monastery, the place of St. Benedict's retirement and death. He profited by his detention to copy some valuable documents relating to the rule of that great Saint, in which labour he was assisted by Brother Maurus. Thus engaged, and in so holy a spot, he felt in no hurry to leave it, but Providence, as usual, arranged matters for him, and the Governor of the Duchy of Benevento, having chanced to come to Monte Cassino, willingly provided him with a passport to travel in the Neapolitan States.

He had no sooner reached Gaeta than he had to present himself before Pius IX., for the Pope's confessor, warned by Mgr. Bighi that he was expected, had procured an immediate audience for him. "I had not even time," he said, "to brush the dust of the road off my clothes and shoes." Nor was this the only incongruity of his attire, for in a letter written about this period to a friend in France, when alluding to the very low state of their finances, he says that their clothes, not new when they left France, had now arrived at a very mature age. His cassock had several holes in it, and, as he had no extra pieces wherewith

to patch it, he foresaw that he should soon have to shorten it, in order to mend the remainder. The interview lasted at least twenty-five minutes, during all which time he was alone with the Holy Father, who encouraged him to proceed with his work. "Contraries must be met by contraries," his Holiness said. "In the times in which we live neither the active life alone nor the contemplative life alone suffices; we want a union of the two in order to be efficacious for good." This was quite P. Muard's own idea, and he must have rejoiced to hear it from the lips of the Vicar of Christ. "When you have arrived at being twelve in number," added the Holy Father, "we will occupy ourselves about your work." Pius IX. did not forget P. Muard, for in after years, at an audience granted to some of the religious of his congregation, or, rather, province, he said, "I once saw your pious founder. He was a man of prayer." He had made this strong personal impression upon the Holy Father's mind, and this was ineffaceable; all else had been forgotten, the Pope not even recollecting where he had seen him.

P. Muard remained two or three days at Gaeta, during which time the Brother was able to obtain the Pontiff's blessing in company with other strangers admitted to his presence. They now commenced their return journey to Subiaco, and, as usual, on foot; but when they reached the road which turned off to Capua the Brother said, "Would that we were going to see Naples and Mount Vesuvius!" It was but the expression of a passing wish, but that sufficed, and P. Muard at once took the road to Capua. After seeing Naples they went to take a nearer view of the volcano, its terrible neighbour, and the sight of that gaping furnace supplied the Father with a fresh subject for medita-

tion on hell-fire. Their journey back was extremely fatiguing; add to which they were very short of money. Passing through a village near to a seignorial castle where they had received hospitality when on their way to Gaeta in company with Mgr. Bighi, and having as usual repaired to the church, they were recognised by some children, who ran up to the castle to tell the Count that the French priest who had lately been there along with a bishop was at this moment in the church below. The Count at once hastened down to beg the travellers to spend the night at his castle. The invitation was opportune, as the purse was almost empty. On the following morning P. Muard said his Mass, and, after partaking of some breakfast, they resumed their way, but did not reach the Hermitage until eight o'clock in the evening, when they arrived worn out with fatigue and nearly starving. They had walked above forty miles along steep and rugged cross-roads, and had scarcely eaten a mouthful since breakfast. They had been absent six and twenty days.

P. Benoit had been expecting them some time, though he had received no letter since they left. He had prepared some sort of a dish of boiled maize for their supper on the chance of their returning. This had to be heated up again, and whether it were that the maize was spoiling from being kept too long or that by some accident the mess had got burned, so it was that it proved uneatable even to famishing men and ascetic religious. P. Muard after taking a mouthful, which resembled a hot coal, told Brother Maurus to go and make another *bouilli* of wheaten flour. While this was in process of preparation he gave P. Benoit some account of their peregrinations, and then told him that they had just seven Neapolitan sous left in the purse, and even these

would not pass current in the Pontifical States. Moreover, their clothes were quite worn out, and communication with France had become very difficult. M. Boutot of Lezimes had sent them by post the sum of one hundred francs for Masses. It had not come to hand; "and never has," P. Benoit adds, "to this day": he is writing in 1878. Under these circumstances it would seem best to return to France. Did he know when the French packet-boats from Cività Vecchia started for Marseilles? P. Benoit had heard that their days were the 5th, the 15th, and the 25th of each month. It was now the 8th of February, so it was a question whether they could reach Cività Vecchia in time for the boat of the 15th, since it would be necessary to arrive in the course of the previous day.

By the next morning, however, P. Muard had decided that the attempt must be made. P. Benoit was to start for Rome at once, that he might get their passports from the police and have them viséd, so that all might be ready when the others should arrive on the following evening. P. Muard also commissioned him to take a letter to Mgr. Delacroix, Consistorial Clerk of France, which he had kept by him for some time. This letter had been enclosed in one which the Abbé Chauveau had been directed to send him, in reply to that which, it will be remembered, he had written to the Archbishop of Sens on the eve of embarking at Marseilles. P. Muard had found it lying at the post-office when he was about to return from Rome to San Lorenzo with Brother Maurus. He had no time to remit to Mgr. Delacroix the recommendatory letter which it contained, and, indeed, at that moment they had no special need of his services. But now it was otherwise, for they were anxious to secure the assistance of his good offices to

obtain for them from the French Embassy a free passage to Marseilles. P. Muard accompanied P. Benoit to the Sacro Speco and to Santa Scolastica to take leave of their respective abbots and to thank them for their kindness. The Abbot of St. Benedict met them as they were descending the hill. He had caught a sight of the returning pilgrims on the previous evening, and had a sorrowful prescience that they were about to depart. He was moved to tears when he knew this was indeed the truth, and spontaneously offered P. Muard what he could spare from his own slender purse, to aid him on a journey, with the means for which he was indeed wholly unprovided, save by that abiding confidence in God which never failed him.

The next day P. Muard could see him only for a very short time, as the Abbot had to go to St. Scholastica's to join in celebrating her feast on the 10th. "He bade me farewell for ever," says the Abbot in a letter which has been preserved, "telling me that no evil should ensue in consequence of a distressing affair which the revolutionary spirit had provoked against me." Prospects at the moment when P. Muard gave this confident assurance were black enough, and news was to reach Subiaco that very day that the Republic had been proclaimed in Rome on the night of the 8th of February. Nevertheless the promise was fulfilled, and the Abbot, in a letter written after P. Muard's death, said that he believed that it was the virtues of that holy man which protected the Sacro Speco during those evil days. After speaking, in the letter from which we have just quoted, of his leave-taking he goes on to say, "I ask myself why it was that P. Muard came to St. Benedict's, since in France there exist examples of our rule, and solitudes in which he could have meditated; and so the thought

comes into my mind that God sent our holy man into the desert of Subiaco to recall to the minds of us Benedictines our primitive spirit, the rock from which we were hewn, and the deep quarry out of which we were extracted. God called him thither to bless him at the same spot where he had blessed St. Benedict, and to promise him that He would change his desert also into a garden of the Lord."

P. Benoit had taken his solitary way to Rome on the 9th. But the separation was to be short; for, when the Brother had washed a few things, and they had given away their small stock of household utensils and had bidden adieu to the shepherds, the two were able, as we have said, to set out the next morning on the track of their companions. All were grieved at heart at having to leave their peaceful desert, where for nearly four months they had dwelt, free from the turmoil of the world and the strife of tongues, and with nothing but the firmament above, the rocks and forests around, and the Anio flowing beneath to remind them that they were still the denizens of earth. When P. Benoit had reached Rome, and obtained the passports from the police, he went straight to the French Embassy to ask for a free passage to Marseilles. The official replied that the request, particularly as they were three in number, could not be granted, for no less than 250 free passages had recently been given. P. Benoit then proceeded to Mgr. Delacroix's house, to present to him the recommendatory letter of the Archbishop of Sens, but the prelate was unfortunately absent, and not expected home until late in the evening of the next day, which was Sunday. All he could do was to leave the letter and return on the Monday morning, which he did at the desire of P. Muard, who

by that time had arrived, when he had the disappointment to hear Mgr. Delacroix express much regret at not having seen the letter on the Saturday, as he could then have obtained a free passage for them. He gave him, however, twenty francs and a letter to the French Consul at Cività Vecchia, who, he hoped, on his recommendation might accede to their request. On the Sunday, after saying his Mass at Sant' Andrea della Valle, P. Benoit had come about midday to St. Peter's. But on reaching the bridge of St. Angelo he had to wait above an hour to allow the "representatives of the people" and the civic guard to defile. At the head of the latter rode the too famous Garibaldi, mounted on a white horse. The crowd, which had stood gazing, dispersed when they had passed, and the piazza in front of St. Peter's, as well as the grand Basilica itself, remained utterly deserted. The Chapter, however, came and sang Vespers. As P. Benoit left St. Peter's, he met a French priest who had been spending some months in Rome, and told him how near he had been to finding himself in company with the revolutionists. He also enquired who had sung the *Te Deum* for them, and learned that it was a Maltese priest whom they had got to do their work.

P. Muard and his companion did not arrive until late on the Sunday evening, the Father so utterly wearied—for he had not had time to recover the fatigues of his recent journey—that he had been half tempted to lie down in a dry ditch and spend the night there. However, they dragged on, as Brother Maurus recommended, at a slower pace and accomplished the remainder of the way. The next morning he said Mass at Sant' Andrea della Valle; and after breakfast they all repaired to St. Peter's. P. Muard was not a man of

many words, but we may imagine what were his feelings at seeing the holy city trodden under foot by the enemies of God and of His Church, who, moreover, not having as yet dared to doff their hypocritical mask and exhibit themselves in their real character, had been desecrating the great church of the Prince of the Apostles and centre of Catholicism by a mock service of thanksgiving for the success of their sacrilegious villainy. Before going to pay his devotions at the Tomb of the Apostles, he knelt on a *prie-dieu* in front of the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament, where he remained for some time absorbed in prayer. On coming to himself he observed a bishop kneeling by his side, and was about to retire when he recognised Mgr. Morichini, the Archbishop of Nisibis. He, on his part, also recognised P. Muard, and they left St. Peter's together. Monsignor told him that he had just lost his brother, and begged him to say Mass for his soul, inviting him also to come and see him before setting out the next day. Accordingly they repaired to his palace on the morrow, after saying their Masses, and he received them with marked kindness, again repeating his promise of aid whenever he should have the opportunity. "Monsignor," replied P. Muard, "if the day should come when we may need a Cardinal Protector, it will be your future Eminence."

He proved a true prophet, for two or three years later Pius IX. raised Mgr. Morichini to the Cardinalate. This prelate, who greatly revered the pious founder of the Pierre-qui-Vire, always took much interest in his work, and after P. Muard's death was able to do it notable service, although in an indirect manner. Mgr. de Mérode told P. Bernard, the successor of P. Muard, when he and P. Benoit visited him at the Vatican in

the year 1867, that it was to Cardinal Morichini he was indebted for his knowledge of P. Muard, before he became personally acquainted with him when he visited his brother-in-law, the Comte de Montalembert, at La Roche-en-Brenil. He also said, "When that good Cardinal came to the Pope's audiences it was rare indeed that he and I had not some little conversation about the Pierre-qui-Vire". Thus it was that Providence raised up friends for this holy man along his path. He found them without seeking for them, for he started from this principle: the work was God's, not his; it was incumbent on him, therefore, to efface himself in order to allow the Divine action to manifest itself.

P. Muard felt some embarrassment respecting their journey to Cività Vecchia, and very naturally, on account of the state of P. Benoit's feet, which were so much blistered that walking had become, not merely painful, but difficult, and it was a long two days' walk they had before them. Yet he could not leave him behind to follow, because the Brother was entered on his passport as his servant, so would not be permitted to leave Rome without him. The device, well intended by the Vicar-General at Marseilles, thus proved, as devices often prove, an inconvenience. "You must do as best you can," said P. Muard. "Courage! you will reach Cività Vecchia;" and so they all set out on foot. Indeed there was no public conveyance, had their means allowed them to profit by it. P. Muard occupied himself for well-nigh the whole of the way in prayer and contemplation. Once he took out a letter from France which as yet he had not found time to read. It bade him no longer reckon on a sum of money which had been promised him for his projected

work, as straitened circumstances rendered the gift impossible. P. Muard only smiled, and said that when God closed up one source He well knew how to open another.

Several carts passed them which had taken fish to Rome from Cività Vecchia, and P. Muard would gladly have secured a lift for his two crippled companions, for Brother Maurus's feet were becoming nearly as bad as P. Benoit's, but too high a sum was asked. The narrator evidently does not think highly of the disinterested kindness of the Italians in general. "They will do nothing," he says, "without being well paid." The two were therefore obliged to linger behind the Father for a considerable way. They slept at Palo, and that night P. Muard threw himself on a bed, but only until three in the morning, when they were again on foot, and reached their destination by 11 o'clock on the Wednesday. A curious instance of P. Muard's abstraction of mind had occurred on the road between Palo and Cività Vecchia. Notwithstanding his natural courage and supernatural thirst for martyrdom, this man of God had never surmounted a constitutional dread which he had of two things—snakes and horned beasts. The party were sometimes separated, and P. Benoit and the Brother having encountered in passing through a wood a herd of cattle with very long horns, formidable-looking beasts, felt considerable anxiety as to how the Father, who had fallen behind in deep meditation, might pass through this ordeal. On his rejoining them they found that he had not so much as perceived these animals, through the midst of which he must have walked. "See," he simply observed, "what good service modesty does one;" he meant the keeping the eyes from wandering.

On arriving at Cività Vecchia they went straight to the French consul to present Mgr. Delacroix's letter. He was not at all an agreeable personage. They found him lolling in an easy-chair, with the air of a man who would not put himself out of the way for anything or anybody. He never stirred the whole time, took the letter and read it, and then examined the passports, observing that when people travelled with a servant they could very well dispense with a free passage. He added that the packet-boat was delayed by bad weather; so they might return the next day for his answer. Suddenly he seemed to change his mind, and said, "I will allow you two free passages, but your servant must pay for his. After all, gentlemen, studies can be made in France quite as well as at Rome. I do not see why priests should be so desirous to go there." He then signed the passports, and handed them back with the manner of one who is discontented at having done a good action. While the moment of hesitation lasted, P. Muard had been fervently praying our Lord to move the official to grant their petition. His prayer had been heard. On leaving the house he said, "We shall be able to pay for the Brother's passage". "And what would you have done," asked P. Benoit, "had the consul refused the two free passages?" "I should have placed myself in our Lord's hands," he replied, "and have returned to France through Piedmont." As the boat did not sail until Saturday no time could be allowed for passengers to land at Leghorn; they were therefore debarred from even hearing Mass on the Sunday. On the Monday night they once more set foot on their native soil.

At Marseilles P. Muard left them in order to make a solitary expedition to Aix in Provence, for the

purpose of seeing and paying his respects to Mgr. d'Harcimolles, the Archbishop, who had formerly been Vicar-General to Mgr. de Cosnac; hoping also that he might give him some intentions for Masses, so as to enable them to prosecute their journey. The two others were to proceed by rail to Avignon and meet him there. He was unsuccessful in his application, the Archbishop telling him that he had no intentions at his disposal, and was himself very poor, for the stipend due to him was three months in arrears. He received him graciously, however, and invited him to partake of his frugal repast. It was Ash Wednesday. On the previous day P. Muard had dined in very different company, but what others would have regarded as a humiliation was a subject of joy to him. He had stopped short of Aix at a little village, being unwilling to disturb the Archbishop at so late an hour. He approached a group of men in the street, and asked if any of them could tell him of a respectable house where he could be lodged for the night. These Provençals, for the most part, did not understand French and made no reply; at last one came forward and said, "Monsieur l'Abbé, my masters are good people and will be glad to receive you". And so in a sense they were, but, considering his sacerdotal character, the welcome, if not unkind, was unbefitting. The mistress, who, however, was by no means uncivil in her manner, set him to dine with her servants, who had a separate table in the same room where their employers dined. If P. Muard's cassock had not been so shabby he would probably have been favoured with a seat at the upper table. He said afterwards that he was much happier where he was, and, moreover, had a much better dinner. The principals he saw had some poultry, but the servants,

besides a piece of fresh pork, to which, of course, he had nothing to say, had abundance of vegetables, so he fared excellently well.

The village schoolmaster came to spend the evening at the house, and was very civil to him. Observing the bad state of his clothes, he respectfully asked him if he were not a missionary from foreign parts. When P. Muard had explained that he was indeed a missionary but belonged to the diocese of Sens, the man replied, "I have a profound veneration for those men who go to heathen lands to carry to them the light of the gospel, and thus labour for their civilisation. I do not like those priests who roll about in carriages, and who are far from resembling missionaries in the life they lead. I see you are poor, I know, too, you came on foot from Marseilles, and I esteem you none the less; besides, I perceive that you are a man of education." In bidding him adieu he pressed his hand cordially, and told him that he felt happy at having passed the evening in his company. "Rest assured," he said, "that you carry away with you all the esteem of the teacher of this little village, and be so kind as to remember him and the evening of Shrove Tuesday which you spent with him." The good servant who had brought P. Muard to the house asked his mistress for a sheet, and then led the Father to a barn, where he laid down some straw. Such was the bed provided for one who, if poorly attired, was, as priest of the Lord, invested with a dignity which no kings of the earth could bestow. It seems strange that his hosts should have offered him so unbefitting a couch, but, in fact, it was much more comfortable than what he usually prepared for himself with his chairs.

At Chamas, whither he proceeded from Aix on the

afternoon of Ash Wednesday, he had a chilling reception from the Dean, who was Curé of the place, a mortification of which he had, at least, no reason to complain at the house of the well-to-do farmer, although there had been a considerable failure in propriety and due respect. The Dean required to see his papers, which he closely examined, as if he had to deal with a suspicious person. The shabby cassock, no doubt, was still to blame for the treatment its wearer met with; for, even after being satisfied with his credentials, this ecclesiastic seemed reluctant to offer him hospitality for the night. However, he thought better of it and consented to receive him; he also permitted him to say Mass the next morning. P. Muard then took the train to Avignon, being met at the station by his associates, along with the young man whom they had seen on their way to Rome. Another young man, who knew P. Muard well, accompanied the party. He, too, was a wheelwright by trade, and at the close of the mission at Lucy-le-Bois, in 1842, had been deputed by the young men of that place to thank him and the Abbé Bravard for all the good they had done to souls both there and in the neighbourhood. The friends took the travellers to the hospice to look at a beautiful crucifix, carved out of one solid piece of ivory. It procured the pardon of the criminal who executed it in prison, and who had been condemned to death. In the course of the morning they visited the chief objects of religious interest in Avignon, and then took their places in the public conveyance for Orange, P. Muard having first ascertained that P. Benoit had still a small sum remaining of the money he had left with him when he set out for Aix. This overplus was due to the kindness of his Avignon friend with whom he and the Brother had

lodged, and who, aware that they had very little in their purse, would not accept anything in payment.

They reached Orange late in the evening, and put up at a small inn. It was crowded with workmen ; they had, at least, twelve in the room with them, and that by no means a large one. P. Muard regretted his chairs ; however, they were up at three o'clock in the morning and on their way to a little *bourg* called La Pallud at the extremity of Vaucluse, where they hoped to say their Masses. But they had not proceeded two miles before the Father was seized with a violent shivering fit, which deprived him of the power of walking. As they were passing at that moment before a wayside inn he was obliged to send in the Brother to buy a piece of bread to enable himself to proceed. At the entrance of La Pallud he had a passing temptation to lower his travelling bag from his shoulder, probably with the view of making a more respectable appearance and thus securing the chance of a better reception, but he would not yield to it, and said, "We must kill nature". What with his tattered cassock and his pack on his back he must, indeed, have worn a strange appearance. The Curé of La Pallud, however, did not exhibit the mistrust and coldness of the Dean at Chamas. He gave permission at once for P. Benoit to say Mass —the piece of bread had debarred P. Muard from having that satisfaction—and gave him five francs for some intentions, a civil way, as P. Benoit observed, of bestowing an alms.

In the church they found the Vicaire, who was extremely kind, and took them at once to an hotel kept by an old dame named Pradelle and her two daughters. Here they left their bags and went back to the church, where P. Benoit said his Mass, and they then returned

to dinner, which P. Muard had ordered in the style of their fare at San Lorenzo di Fanello. When he asked for his bill, the excellent landlady would take nothing in payment. "You will pray the good God for me, M. l'Abbé," she said, "and for my family." P. Benoit avers that during their whole journey this was the sole repast gratuitously offered to them with the exception of the hospitality shown them by the Avignon young man, to whom, however, P. Muard afterwards sent a suitable remuneration. To the good mistress of the Hotel du Nord at La Pallud, and to her daughters he gave some devotional objects which he had brought with him from Rome. They all asked his blessing at parting, which he bestowed right willingly. They were well acquainted with La Trappe d'Aiguebelle, and gave him directions about the road to take, for it was thither that P. Muard was directing his steps. As the day was too far advanced for them to reach the monastery that evening they decided upon stopping for the night at Pierrelatte, a small town numbering some 4,000 inhabitants. The distance not being great they arrived at about 4 o'clock.

The church was in process of reconstruction, but a neighbouring building was set apart for the public services. On entering, they found the devotion of the Stations of the Cross in progress; when it was concluded, our travellers enquired of the Vicaires whether they knew of any respectable house where they could be taken in for the night. Nothing could be colder than was their reception, which not only lacked politeness, but was even in a certain degree impertinent. When P. Muard asked if they might be allowed to say Mass the next morning they replied curtly, "Go and ask the Dean. He is ill, however, so you will not be

able to see him." "What a difference," observed P. Muard, as he left the church, "between these priests and the clergy of the diocese of Avignon! Let us look for an inn. To-morrow at daybreak we will set out for Aiguebelle."

CHAPTER XXI.

Ten Days at La Trappe d'Aiguebelle. Return to Pontigny. Final Arrangements.

P. Muard's attraction to the Trappist monastery of Aiguebelle was owing to a priest of the diocese of Sens who yearly made a retreat there, and who had often spoken to him of the life of mortification and prayer which was led by its religious. A visit to this abbey would furnish them, he now thought, with the opportunity of seeing the Benedictine rule in all its primitive strictness observed by a whole community. Leaving Pierrelatte on the morning of Saturday, February 24th, they took a road turning to the right. It followed the course of a valley through which the stream flows which traverses the lands belonging to the Trappists. During their four hours' walk P. Muard was suffering from an intense irritation and itching round his waist. However, he pushed on, and at last they entered the grounds of the monastery and could see the lay-brothers engaged here and there in agricultural work. As they approached the convent they descried the choir-monks together with the novices, occupied also in manual labour. They were rolling down enormous blocks of stone from a neighbouring hill for the purpose of constructing a wall of support between the garden and the stream. The pilgrims paused a moment to observe them,

and to notice their vestments. A few more minutes' walk brought them to the door of the monastery. They rang and the door was speedily opened by a lay-brother, who had seen them from a window, and had perceived that two of them were priests. The first thing he did was to kneel down on the threshold to ask their blessing as prescribed by the rule of St. Benedict. On rising he received their passports, which P. Muard handed to him saying that they came from Rome. The Brother conducted them into the inner parlour, and, as it was the hour of manual labour, only one choir-monk came to take them to the church. This is prescribed by the Benedictine rule, in order to guard against diabolical illusion. The religious presented them holy water and knelt down, inviting them to do the same. They then recited a *Pater* and an *Ave* and returned to the parlour, where he read them a passage out of the *Imitation of Christ*. After this he prostrated himself on the floor, repeating this verse out of the Psalms of David : "*Suscepimus, Deus, misericordiam tuam in medio templi tui*".* Then he rose and conducted them to the hostelry.

Having committed them to the care of the guest-master he retired, his office being accomplished. The guest-master, P. Samuel, was quite a young religious. As he contemplated their squalid appearance and tattered clothes he looked for a moment as if he hardly knew what to make of them, but, recovering his confidence a little, he went in search of the Abbot and told him that two priests and a layman who belonged to the diocese of Sens had just arrived from Rome, in a state betokening the greatest poverty, and that the

* "We have received Thy mercy, O God, in the midst of Thy temple."—Psalm xlvii. 9.

oldest of them desired to speak to him. If a religious of La Trappe could be almost staggered at the spectacle they presented, it may help at least to account for, if not to excuse, the strange behaviour of the priests at Pierrelatte. Even the Abbot Orsize confesses that his first impression, though an evanescent one, when he beheld P. Muard was that he was some vagabond or tramp, but he was not slow to perceive the sanctity concealed under these beggarly rags, and to feel the highest veneration for him. "I seemed," he said, "to behold again in his person a second Francis of Assisi." He found P. Muard in the little garden in front of the cells which are allotted to guests, and they walked up and down together, while the Father explained to him his project, and told him how they had been abiding for near four months in the Hermitage of San Lorenzo di Fanello, not far from St. Benedict's monastery, and how he had been admitted at Gaeta to a special audience by the Sovereign Pontiff, who said that the active life alone or the contemplative life alone did not in the present time suffice to convert souls, but that the two must be united. "Reverend Father Abbot," he added, "before setting our hands to the work we should need to spend, at least, six weeks here, in order to observe the conduct and discipline of a religious community." "You will not remain six weeks only," replied the Abbot, "but you shall make your noviciate here. Your work is God's work; fear not to proceed in spite of the contradictions you may meet with."

One might have imagined, from the cordial welcome he received from the Abbot of Aiguebelle, that P. Muard was a guest long expected. Not a question was asked him any more than at the Sacro Speco, not a suspicion was entertained about him, not a doubt lest

he might be undertaking a work beyond his strength or competency. As it was Saturday and the Abbot had numerous confessions to hear, he could not remain long with his guest, but left him in the hands of P. Samuel, with full powers to provide for him in every way. This young religious speedily conceived a great affection for P. Muard, and regarded him as a saint. Indeed he was very soon seeking counsel of him concerning some interior trials which greatly disquieted him. To return, however, to P. Muard's present exterior sufferings to which allusion has been made. As soon as he had been installed in his cell he proceeded to examine into the cause of the distressing irritation which he was enduring, and, to his consternation, he discovered that it proceeded from swarms of vermin, which P. Benoit opines he must have picked up in some tavern when travelling back from Gaeta with Brother Maurus, who said it was not surprising, since he used to lie down without so much as wiping the benches on which the Neapolitans had been sitting. Such an importation would have been a very probable result, but it would seem that in that case it must have made itself felt sooner; and, when we recollect the dormitory recently shared with twelve poor workmen at Orange, it does not seem unlikely that he owed this disagreeable acquisition to some of its occupants. But this matters little. There the creatures were, to the Father's great affliction, who told P. Benoit that he considered he had fallen into the very lowest depth of humiliation, and, had he been aware of his condition, he would have pursued his journey without stopping at Aiguebelle. But this was not at all the point of view in which the Trappists were disposed to regard the circumstance. P. Samuel, when informed by P. Benoit, who undertook to tell

him, made very light of the matter. "It is nothing," he said, "I will fetch him some other clothes; his own shall be washed, and, when he has taken a bath on Monday morning, there will be an end of the whole thing." When the guest-master said something about it to the Abbot he simply replied, "So much the better, I am very glad of it," so accustomed was this ascetical monk to consider humiliations as a cause of joy.

No doubt, knowing that P. Muard was also a lover of humiliations, he gave him credit for experiencing a pleasure in this particular affliction, which he certainly did not; but, as the Father does not appear to have ever opened his lips on the subject to any but his two companions, the Abbot probably continued under this impression, which will account for what he said in a letter written after the holy man's death. It was, no doubt, on this letter that the Abbé Brullée grounded his assertion of the great joy which P. Muard felt at being thus infested, adding that he would willingly have persevered in a humiliating penance which many saints before him have practised. We have, however, the sure authority of P. Benoit for believing that such was by no means the case. One of the great merits of P. Benoit's unvarnished narrative is its minute and scrupulous accuracy. This imparts a singular value to his record. Notwithstanding the profound reverence with which he regarded his holy founder, he is never occupied with representing him simply as a saint, albeit he certainly esteemed him to be such. He portrays the man as well, and that precisely as he was.

However, that P. Muard should have been far from relishing dirt and its accompaniments in no way detracts from his sanctity. St. Bernard's well-known saying, "Poverty I have ever loved, but dirt never,"

proves that saints, and great saints too, have shared his aversion for uncleanliness. Moreover, St. Teresa prayed that her daughters might be exempt from the particular plague which P. Muard, as we see, regarded as the extreme of humiliation. Human nature, unless degraded by low habits or vicious idleness, shrinks instinctively from what is loathsome; and what more loathsome than this living plague from which many of our poor recoil with as much repugnance as do their so-called betters! True it is that some saints have been moved, not only willingly to endure, but positively to value as though they were so many jewels these repulsive parasites, but this has been by a particular movement of the Holy Ghost, and where He has not imparted such attraction no one is bound or could even be recommended to make them the objects of imitation in this respect. Besides, we must remember that what P. Muard specially felt was the having inflicted himself as a guest upon the Trappists when in such a condition. The bath was taken on the Monday morning, and P. Benoit says that a complete riddance of these disagreeable companions was the result, and that they never again returned. The cassock which was given him was one of a thin texture suitable for summer, which was still a good way off; moreover, it was too short. This was a mortification to which P. Muard's mind did not so much as advert. He was thankful for what Providence sent him; he had food and raiment, and with these was content, as the Apostle of the Gentiles was before him.

Brother Maurus was admitted into the interior of the monastery, where he was able to follow the community life, and worked at those employments for which his former trade had fitted him. But for the priests to

have entrance into the choir permission must be obtained from Rome. In the meantime they had a room assigned to them not far from the tribune in which strangers assisted at Divine service. Here they were able to join with the monks in saying office, whether by day or night. The answer from Rome as to their admittance into the choir was in the negative, seeing that they had no intention of remaining. The Abbot, however, allowed them to go out to work with the choir-monks daily, and also to dine in the refectory with them. They also said Mass every morning at a fixed hour. P. Muard's heart was flooded with joy and gratitude at finding himself in the midst of men whom he esteemed to be angels upon earth, far from the din of the world, in a spot dear to Heaven, and where the spiritual atmosphere was, if anywhere, as severe and bracing as heart could desire. No one was more fitted than he to taste the sweets of claustral solitude. Deep in his soul resounded the cry of the Apostle on the mount: "Lord, it is good for us to be here". Indeed his inner life may be said to have been spent between Thabor and Calvary, to which magnets of equal force were alternately drawing him.

After a blessed week, during which his time was divided between meditation, prayer, and manual labour —contemplation and silence standing in lieu of recreation to him—he was advised by the Abbot, to whom he had communicated his existing relations with Pontigny, of which, in fact, he was still the official superior, to go forthwith and settle the affairs of that house in order that he might return, with a mind perfectly free and disengaged from all worldly cares, to begin his noviciate at Aiguebelle. Reluctant as he felt to go, P. Muard obeyed at once, having resolved from the

moment he entered the monastery to act under obedience; but now a material difficulty arose, the want of money: he had just seven francs remaining. When, however, he had resolved to start on a much longer journey from San Lorenzo di Fanello he had in his pocket only seven Neapolitan sous, which would not pass current in the Pontifical States; so that, considering that they had never asked alms and, with the exception of the two free-passages and their dinner at La Pallud, had always paid their expenses, they had received ample proof that he who places full trust in Divine Providence will never be disappointed. That help did not fail P. Muard now. The large community of Aiguebelle were, like himself, trustful waiters on the bounty of Him who feeds the young ravens, so, althongh there were but ten francs in their money-box on Sunday evening, the Abbot handed them over to the guest-master to present to P. Muard who, it had been arranged, was to set out on the Tuesday morning. When P. Samuel gave him the money he said, "We are in need of it ourselves, but you will see we shall have more to-morrow"; and, in point of fact, so it happened. A guest whom they had entertained,—for hospitality is generously practised by the Trappists,—left that very day, and at parting bestowed on them a sum of money sufficiently large to meet their necessities, and also to supply P. Muard with enough for his journey.

This circumstance reminded P. Samuel of an incident which he related to him. It was two or three years since the Reverend Father Abbot had to repair with another religious to the General Chapter of the Grande Trappe de Mortagne. There was not a cent in the money-chest when they were about to set out, but the Father Abbot said, "Let us go; we shall perhaps find

some money at Montélimart in the hands of our man of business". Arrived at Montélimart they found nothing. "We will proceed to Lyons," said the Abbot, "and there we will borrow wherewithal to pay our diligence fares;" and so they left Montélimart without a sou. The conveyance stopped for a short time at Loriol, a little *bourg* between that place and Valence. A gentleman, catching the sight of a white robe in the coach, drew near, recognised the Father Abbot of Aiguebelle, and entreated him to alight for a few minutes to refresh himself a little in his house close by. He pressed him so earnestly that the Abbot could not refuse and got down with his companion. They had scarcely entered the house when the gentleman said, "I was intending to visit you and take you five hundred francs, but since we have met I shall not go". The Abbot told him that the money came most opportunely, for they had left Aiguebelle that morning without a sou, and their man of business at Montélimart was not able to supply them with any. His friend then assured him that if the five hundred francs were not enough he could double the sum without inconvenience. "These five hundred francs are sufficient," replied the Abbot, rejoicing in his heart that he had placed his confidence in God. "Thank you, Father," said P. Muard, much edified by this little anecdote. "I love to think that I shall profit by it, should I be placed in similar circumstances." And so he started for Montélimart on the 7th of March, with the snow lying thick on the ground, attired in his thin short cassock.

This insufficient clothing was, no doubt, the main cause of the illness which attacked him soon afterwards. He did not go straight to the diocese of Sens but sought out his old and valued associate, the Abbé Bravard,

in his parish of Cogny not far from Villefranche. Although they had differed in opinion as to the expediency of a particular good work, nothing had made a breach in the warm affection which united these two former fellow-labourers. After a few days' rest, P. Muard proceeded to Avallon, where his arrival was quite unexpected. His appearance took good Mme. Parent, to whose house he went, by surprise in more senses than one. As he entered the door her quick eye caught a sight of the unseasonable cassock and its unsuitableness to his height. She lost not a moment, therefore, in despatching her servant to buy some cloth to make him a new one. "He must not walk about the town of Avallon in that state," she said. From this kind and charitable lady he had heard while in Italy of the embarrassed circumstances of one of her relatives, whom she had to assist to a considerable amount. "You can, therefore," she added, "no longer reckon upon me for the beginning of your work." This was the letter he read while on the road to Cività Vecchia, and we have seen how easily he consoled himself. His boundless confidence in God was not to be disappointed; for, after all, this excellent lady was able to give him the first thousand francs towards the construction of his monastery. After visiting his pious friends at Avallon he went to St. Germain-des-Champs, whose Curé, it will be remembered, was a special friend of his, and had promised to interest himself, during his absence, concerning a site for his monastery. Here he was seized with an attack of fever, the consequence of a neglected cold, which detained him there for three weeks.

The following quotation from a letter written to Aiguebelle more than a month after his departure gives a brief account of his proceedings up to that date. His

silence hitherto had been occasioned by this illness, which did not allow him to repair to Sens until the Tuesday in Holy Week. "Monseigneur," he says, "received me extremely well. He authorizes us to make our noviciate at La Trappe d'Aiguebelle; he even permits me to take with me any priest of his diocese who shall resolve on embracing our mode of life, and hopes that I shall not return alone to the monastery. He has written to the Holy Father concerning our admission to the noviciate, and in terms which prove the interest which he takes in our work. I have been agreeably surprised to find almost all the priests whom I have met in our diocese very well disposed towards our congregation: several have evinced a desire to join it later." In a subsequent letter he writes, "If you desire my return, I desire it myself no less eagerly. My fatigue of the world could not be exceeded; this is not life which I lead in it, I am more wearied of it than ever, and ardently do I sigh for the happy moment when I may bid it an eternal adieu, and enter into that holy and beloved solitude where I hope at last to labour at the sanctification of my soul and repair the many years lost for eternity. Oh, how I long to find myself once more with those angels of the desert, whose life edified me so much, with those saints whom I venerate and love with my whole soul. But alas! I must resign myself to spend some more weeks yet in the world, that I may conclude all my affairs. I also think I must wait for the priests who are willing to join us, that we may begin our noviciate altogether. Now, in order that their posts may not be left vacant, Monseigneur desires them not to leave before the feast of the Blessed Trinity. I reckon, therefore, on setting out with them and reaching Aiguebelle for the feast of the Blessed

Sacrament, unless new obstacles should arise to retard our departure."

These letters were written at Pontigny, where he was actively occupied in regulating everything, in order that no inconvenience might arise from his removal. Nothing, however, that he might do could prevent his children from feeling the separation acutely, although they cordially loved and venerated the Abbé Boyer, who had been supplying his place and who was now unanimously elected as superior. P. Muard, on his part, never withdrew his affection from Pontigny ; and it so happened that the last visit he paid before his decease was to this house, and in company with his former fellow-labourer, the Abbé Bravard. The infant community was now established on a firm basis by its members taking their vows, so that henceforth they formed a true religious congregation under the name of Fathers of St. Edme (St. Edmund), which was to continue with zeal the work which P. Muard had inaugurated, and which had already conferred so many benefits on numerous parishes.

CHAPTER XXII.

The Pierre-qui-Vire. The Cholera.

After settling some family affairs at Vireaux P. Muard made his way back to St. Germain-des-Champs with the view of seeking out a suitable site for his monastery. His predilections had always been in favour of the Avallonais, and in that district the wild tract of the Morvand was most of all to his taste. We have seen how during one of his missions in the neighbour-

hood of Quarrè-les-Tombes, in the year 1844, his imagination had been vividly impressed with the aspect of its rugged solitudes; and it was in the depths of the forest of St. Léger-Vauban that he believed a site might be found most suitable for a monastic congregation, which at that time he had not received a mission to found. He had also, since his return from Italy, made excursions into these regions. One day, while thus engaged and accompanied by the Abbé Cullin, Curé of St. Germain, and some other confidential friends, the Curé, whose early youth had been passed in a land of vineyards, joyfully exclaimed, as he fixed his eyes on the slope of a hill well exposed to the sun's rays, "What an excellent vineyard you might have here! It would yield a true wine of Chablis." He thought he was setting forth an advantage of the situation, but P. Muard, turning to him with a dry look not commonly seen on his face, soon took down the Abbé's enthusiasm by telling him that in his monastery no wine would be drunk. "Well, then," said the Abbé, "it would serve for the guests." "Those who may visit us," replied the Father, "will be drawn to us by serious thoughts; they will be welcomed with all the cordiality which Christian charity requires, they will have all that is necessary, but they must not look to finding in our house choice wines or worldly delicacies." The Abbé Brullée, who furnishes this little anecdote, judiciously adds, "And P. Muard was right: monasteries would not fulfil their providential object if they did not offer to the persons visiting them and to the children educated in them striking examples of Christian simplicity. We may apply to monasteries that passage of the gospel: 'You are the salt of the earth; but, if the salt lose its savour, it is good for nothing more but to be cast out

and trodden on by men'." * Herein he sees one of the causes of the terrible storm which overwhelmed in the last century so many splendid abbeys, where there reigned too much attachment to those comforts of life which the world so eagerly seeks. Poverty is the most seemly ornament of religious orders. It was a virtue which P. Muard pushed to its extremest limits.

It will be remembered that the Curé of St. Germain had been commissioned by P. Muard to enter into communication with a noble family, that of Chastellux, to obtain permission for the erection of a monastery on some site upon their property, which lay in those parts. He was not to mention the name of the applicant, but only to explain the object in view, and the character of the contemplated congregation. The old Comte de Chastellux received the request most favourably, but he had since made over all his domains to his two daughters, the Marquise de Lur-Saluce and the Marquise de Chastellux, who was married to her cousin of the same name. Notwithstanding this resignation of his property the old Comte made reservation of his promise, and his children had no desire to oppose his wishes. P. Muard was now placed in personal communication with the family, but he was under the erroneous impression that the forest of St. Léger-Vauban had formed a portion of the Marquise de Lur-Saluce's share of the lands and had been sold, so that, when he had an interview with the Marquis de Chastellux on the subject of his projected monastery, he made no allusion to this forest and spoke only of another site which seemed to offer certain advantages for the pur-

* St. Matthew v. 13.

pose. There was, however, one drawback. The wood in which the monastery would have been built was in the vicinity of the Marquis's château. The Marquis on his part also felt that this would be an objection, and apprehended many inconveniences which might result to both parties from such near neighbourhood. He did not say so, however, until years afterwards when P. Muard was dead, but made another suggestion, which the Father most gladly welcomed. "I have," he said, "in my forest of St. Léger-Vauban situations which would be much more suitable for you, and, if you do not find any you like there, you can go and seek for one in my forest of Cure. P. Muard lost no time in profiting by this offer, and asked the Abbé Cullin to accompany him in his search for the Pierre-qui-Vire, of which he had accidentally heard during the mission in 1844, and which he thought must be distant little more than a mile from Quarré-les-Tombes in the forest of St. Léger-Vauban.

The Abbé was not strong and was, besides, suffering at the time from a bad cold, so that, physically speaking, it was by no means an agreeable expedition to him; but he took so much interest in the business and had so high a value for his saintly friend, whose company he said was "curative," that he consented to go with him, and was not even deterred by the downpour of rain which ushered in this memorable day. He says it was towards the 10th of May; but we should have liked to fix the precise date. It was in Mary's month, anyhow. They made first, pretty well on a venture, for the hamlet of Trinclin to procure a guide. There they spoke to a man who, on recognising the Curé of St. Germain, offered himself in that capacity. On the road their guide was very loquacious, as guides often are,

endeavouring to interest them in every detail, and unsparingly pointing out all local objects : fountains, rocks, old ruins, and so forth. P. Muard neither listened to him nor troubled himself about the pouring rain, all absorbed as he was in his one idea of discovering the place where "he should abide until the resurrection day". "At last," says the Curé, in his account of this uncomfortable walk, "behold us at the foot of the Pierre-qui-Vire, and perhaps I was not the least glad of the party." This huge stone is of Druidical origin, and before it was displaced is said to have revolved ; hence its name, which has been traditionally preserved on the spot. It is oval in form, and quite flat, although there are some excavations on its surface which were probably used to receive the blood of the human victims offered in sacrifice ; for there can be little doubt but that these and similar stones were connected with the idolatrous and cruel rites of heathenism. Yet one day the Dolmen was itself to be, so to say, baptised and sanctified by becoming the basis of an image of the Mother of Mercy, the glorious Queen of Heaven.

The wearied Curé sat down, but P. Muard, superior, as his friend says, to all fatigue, measured with his eye the surrounding solitude and explored in all directions the continuous, furzy, and rugged heights, now drenched with rain. The father wanted to meditate ; the guide wanted to talk ; the Abbé wanted to rest. As P. Muard could not find in the immediate neighbourhood of the memorable stone any ground suitable for a building, he proposed to his companion to carry their researches over a wider circle. "I am where you brought me," replied the Abbé, "and here I stay." Accordingly P. Muard and the guide started afresh, and the Curé remained seated on the wet grass, and eating

a morsel of dry bread. "There," he says, "I sat grumbling at my fatigue, at the rain, and perhaps—which may God forgive me—at this good Abbé Muard, whom nevertheless I loved with all my heart." Making his way among brushwood and gorse, and clambering about among the rocks which border the Trinclin, the Father discovered on the slope of a hill a limpid spring of water, the name of which he enquired of the guide, who with difficulty kept up with the holy man, whose zeal seemed to give wings to his feet. "It is the Fontaine Sainte Marie," he replied; "it never runs dry." At the hearing of those words P. Muard was struck with an irresistible conviction that he had found that for which he was seeking. "How came the fountain to bear this name?" he asked. "No one knows; it has always been called so in this country."

As he put this question to the guide and received this answer he was still walking on, and now he stood on a plateau which appeared to unite all the required conditions of a site for his monastery. He forthwith fell on his knees and blessed the Lord for having discovered to him this austere solitude which he had so long ardently desired and pictured to himself in imagination. He thought, however, that it would be best to go and explore the other locality which the Marquis had offered him in the forest of Cure. This he did the next day by himself, but only with the result of fixing him more firmly than ever in his first decision. "There is no spot comparable to the Pierre-qui-Vire," he said to the Abbé on returning. Matters were soon arranged between him and the generous family with whom he was in treaty, for they bestowed the ground upon him gratuitously. He then wrote to P. Benoit at Aiguebelle, and acquainted him with the joyful news. He

had found and secured for the monastery a true Thebaid in the forest of St. Léger-Vauban ; it would be to them another San Lorenzo di Fanello. Providence had once more signally favoured them. The ground was a free gift to them, and money, unasked, had been coming in little by little, so that there was now sufficient to enable them to begin at once to build. " Thank, then, the good God," he said, " who gives us such special aid ; love Him more and more, and serve Him with renewed fervour ; for alas ! I love and serve Him very ill in the midst of the pre-occupation which absorbs me. But it consoles me to remember that it is not my own will I am doing by remaining in a world which wearies me to death." He was longing, he said, to return in order to profit by the abundance of graces and benedictions which they were enjoying in a house where all breathed sanctity, while he was tarrying in a world the whole atmosphere of which tends to relaxation, and whose barren soil receives scantily of the dews of heaven.

But it was needful that he should remain until he had traced out the plan of the building and set the men to work with clear directions for their guidance. Building was fortunately far cheaper in those days than it now is, and the edifice he planned was extremely simple. He reckoned that when what was promised in the way of funds was added to what he had in hand there would be enough to complete the shell of the building in the course of that year, 1849. He would have desired to be able to superintend the execution of the work ; indeed no one could well replace him in this capacity ; but he was, so to say, tortured with the longing desire to return to his solitude, and form himself to the practice of all the religious virtues in the company of its pious inmates. He had, however, as has been observed,

to wait for the priests who had promised to join him. One only, after all, adhered to his resolution, the Abbé Moreau, and he had to contend with many interior trials, being sorely tempted to recoil from the life that lay before him. He was, however, sustained under these conflicts by P. Muard, who encouraged him to drink of the chalice lovingly presented to him by his Lord, a chalice of which all His favoured disciples have to partake and is, indeed, a mark of their vocation. After the combat would come rest, and peace beyond expression. Brother Marie from Pontigny, already known to the reader as the confidant of P. Muard's austerities, also agreed to accompany him to Aiguebelle. The day for departure was fixed, and the party were to meet at Avallon, but he purposed before starting to have the ceremony of blessing and laying the first stone of the monastery of the Pierre-qui-Vire. This was to take place on the 22nd of July.

In the beginning of that month the cholera broke out in those parts, and P. Muard at once devoted himself to visiting and assisting the sick. Night and day he was at their bedside, passing rapidly from one place to another, for everywhere in that neighbourhood the epidemic was making frightful ravages. He went first to Ste. Colombe, where the Curé of the parish, his father, sister, and servant were carried off in the course of a few days; then to Massangis and thence to Tonnerre, which was suffering peculiarly from this terrible scourge. After ministering to the sick and dying he hastened back to direct his workmen employed in digging the foundations of the future monastery. He had made the willing sacrifice of his life; hitherto, however, it had pleased God that he should escape the infection; but on the eve of the day when the ceremonial of bless-

ing the first stone was to take place, and he had gone to Avallon to complete some final arrangements, it was observed, as he stepped into the public conveyance at Quarré-les-Tombes, that he looked and seemed very unwell. As usual he was impervious to all entreaties to spare himself and take some rest. He would not forego his journey. He went, and even, when at Avallon, he put a force upon himself to visit, with his friend, the Archpriest of St. Lazare, the church which was undergoing extensive repairs and restoration, and inspect everything attentively; he intended, moreover, to return to St. Léger in the evening. But, however he might endeavour to deceive himself and others as to the serious nature of his indisposition, he was constrained to yield to the remonstrances of the Archpriest and consent to spend that night at the house of his old friend, Mme. Dessignes. A few hours sufficed to prove, not only that he was attacked by cholera, but that his recovery was more than doubtful.

The whole place was in consternation when they learned the sad news, but there was one general persuasion that die he would not at the very commencement of his great work, even were a miracle required to save him. As for the sufferer himself, he was entirely resigned to the Divine Will. "I know not," he said, "what will come of this illness, but, if the good God were to offer me the choice between life and death, I should be much embarrassed. I should say to Him, 'My God, choose for me'." His friends pressed him to pray for his recovery, begging him to promise to our Lady a pilgrimage to La Salette if his prayer should be granted; but he consented to make it only on condition that no one attending him should catch the complaint; his own life came in the second place, so

accustomed was he ever to prefer others to himself. Meanwhile, the intensity of his sufferings increasing, he desired to learn the doctor's precise opinion of his state and received, as he afterwards expressed it, "*Responsum mortis* (an answer of death)". Humanly speaking, there seemed no possibility of saving him. He heard this decision with perfect calmness. It neither surprised nor saddened him. The sole regrets which he uttered were that he had not made better use of the years given to him and of the graces of the priesthood; nevertheless, nothing could disturb his perfect confidence in the mercy of God. He was heard to murmur, "Blessed be Thou, O my God! I thank Thee, and have but one regret, to die without having done anything for Thee. Yet I desire to do something for Thy glory; it is my infidelities, no doubt, which have hindered this. Nevertheless, in spite of all my miseries, I trust in Thy mercy. Oh! no, I am not afraid to appear before Thee, because Thou art good!"

This was the evening of the Sunday, and he immediately asked for the last sacraments, which the Archpriest administered to him amidst a group of weeping friends. They wept indeed, not, assuredly, for one who seemed ripe for heaven, but for themselves who were to lose him, and for the great work which he was on the eve of inaugurating and would now be buried in the grave with him. All such thoughts had, however, vanished from P. Muard's mind, absorbed as he was in his devotions and with eyes open only to another and a better world. As for his work, his plans, his engagements, all was set aside from the moment that he saw himself on the threshold of eternity. He was but an instrument in God's hands; God is pleased to break

that instrument, which He needs not to carry out His divine purposes; so not a word of complaint issues from his lips. He must die, and his whole thought now is to die in union with his crucified Lord, in the spirit of expiation as a victim for the salvation of poor sinners. Not even his frequent excruciating accessions of pain nor his interior recollection prevented him, however, from giving a solicitous eye to the preparations in his room for receiving the King of Glory who was coming to him, in order that nothing should be wanting to do Him honour.

It would be impossible to describe the profound religious attention with which he followed all the prayers and ceremonies of Extreme Unction. No one could better realize than he, who had so often administered the dying, the deep riches of Holy Church's rites; but what words could paint the look of love which he fixed on the Blessed Eucharist when presented to him as his Viaticum for eternity! He has received Him now, the God of his heart, as, he believes, for the last time. A solemn silence ensues, while tears are flowing copiously from the eyes of all present, when P. Muard, unable to separate himself from Him whom he so ardently loved, besought the minister of God to place the vessel containing the Blessed Sacrament upon his forehead that he might receive a more abundant blessing. But at that moment, transported by an ecstasy of love, he stretched forth his feeble hands and, grasping the sacred vessel, pressed it against his bosom, as if he desired to expire leaning on the Heart of his Beloved. The Archpriest had to withdraw the ciborium from him, saying, "Come, my dear friend, you must reserve something for heaven". Contrary to all expectation, the crises of pain became less frequent now, and less

violent, and in the course of the day some water of La Salette was given to him. The improvement continued till the close of the week. Hope revived among friends and prayers redoubled in fervour. During all this time, and through the long hours when his weakness imposed silence on him, it was easy to perceive how his mind was inwardly occupied. He had a picture of Jesus crowned with thorns and His body torn with wounds placed before him, together with those of the Adorable Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary; his eyes might be seen to turn from one to the other, and occasionally some pious exclamation would drop from his lips, such as the following: "So much love on the one part, so many crimes and so much coldness on the other".

A terrible relapse came to dash to the ground hopes which had risen to confidence, and P. Muard was again at the gates of death. Again also he renewed the generous sacrifice of his life, and requested to receive the Viaticum once more. This fresh attack, sharp as it was, did not last, and very shortly there seemed to be a sure prospect of his recovery. As soon as he was fit for the exertion, Mlle. de Richerolles, one of his most devoted friends at Avallon, insisted upon his being removed to her house in the parish of St. Lazare, which was contiguous to the church as well as near to the presbytery, where his spiritual father, the Abbé Darcy, resided. P. Muard, during his illness, had not lost sight of those whom he had left at Aiguebelle, and the Archpriest, by his desire, had kept them informed of his state. Even when his life was despaired of, this good priest had an inward conviction that his holy friend would not die until his mission was accomplished a conviction which P. Benoit and Brother Maurus,

as well as the Abbot Orsise and all the religious of Aiguebelle, fully shared; for, notwithstanding the shortness of his stay with the Trappists, they had seen enough to conceive for him the most profound veneration, and they all believed that he had a great work before him, and that God, by this trial, was only sealing him more perfectly for the fulfilment of his high mission. As his convalescence must be somewhat prolonged, he judged it advisable that his two companions, the Abbé Moreau and Frère Marie, who had resolved to join his future community, should precede him to Aiguebelle, that they might commence their noviciate without loss of time. Thither accordingly they repaired in the beginning of August, and received the warmest welcome.

By degrees P. Muard was regaining his strength, more rapidly, indeed, than could have been anticipated, and, though reduced for the present to inaction, none the less was he edifying all who approached him. His patience, his sweetness, his cheerful acquiescence in all that was prescribed for him, his imperturbable serenity, his unaffected gratitude for the least services rendered to him, of which, in his humility, he judged himself most unworthy, all this preached to hearts more effectually than could the most eloquent of sermons. Few persons comparatively are sanctified by sickness, as the *Imitation of Christ* tells us; it seems rather the occasion for eliciting and exhibiting more patently the concealed defects of the sufferers; the tedious time of convalescence especially not seldom eliciting those manifestations, more perhaps than had the preceding severe illness. But with P. Muard it was far otherwise; for, alike in the extreme of suffering at the point of death and in the trials of recovery, he only furnished a more splendid example in personal practice of the virtues he

had so long taught and inculcated. Of the kindness he received he believed he never could speak in terms too exalted, and especially of the heroic devotion of three persons in particular: never could he have credited, he said, the possibility of such a spirit of self-sacrifice had he not witnessed and experienced it. These three were the Archpriest, the doctor, M. Gagniard, who attended him, and Mlle. de Richerolles,* who nursed him with the tenderest charity during his malady, assisted by her good servant, Helène. Each of these three, in their respective spheres, was hereafter also to render important services to him in his great work.

But there was another sharp trial in store for him, to complete his detachment from earth. The scourge visited his native village with special severity, and seemed to have singled out his family for its victims. No less than twenty-five of his kindred were of the number, beginning with his beloved brother, Auguste, and his wife. This account was brought him by an old pupil of his who had been in Vireaux at the time. To each succeeding question the answer came, "He is dead, she is dead"; and, when the mournful list was closed, P. Muard raised his eyes to heaven and said, "Alas! my God I have, then, no longer any relations left on earth". It was a very severe blow to his tender and loving heart, but the bitterness of his grief was much alleviated by hearing how his brother Auguste had died the death of the just. The bearer of the sad news, who had been the witness of his pious end, told P. Muard that Auguste had several times previous to his illness, when speaking of the persecutions from impious neigh-

*Mlle. de Richerolles, we have reason to believe, is the same person who headed the association of prayer which P. Muard established at Avallon.

bours which he had to endure on account of his attachment to his faith, exclaimed, "Oh, if I were but free, would I not fly to the Pierre-qui-Vire, there to live a life of penance with my brother!" And he repeated those sentiments on his deathbed.

"When I arrived," said the narrator, "he was suffering intensely, but he was holding a little crucifix in his hands, the fingers of which were contracted by the tortures which racked him, and was kissing it with ardent love at the very height of his pains. I could not restrain my tears; above all when I heard him cry out in accents betokening the liveliest faith, 'Good Jesus, have pity on me. Jesus, Mary, Joseph, help me'. And he continued making these fervent ejaculations during the whole of the night, until the violence of the agony silenced his voice, and then he only complained of being no longer able to pray. When morning came he insisted on renewing his confession, although he had but lately made it. The Curé came to visit him for the last time, and then they all knelt down to recite the prayers for the dying; a few moments afterwards his soul had gone to God." He added, "Of all the hundred and fifty cholera patients I have visited, none I believe suffered so cruelly, but neither did I ever witness so much faith, resignation, devotion, and love of God as in him. I besought the Lord that my death might be like to his!"

Towards the end of August P. Muard was sufficiently re-established to resume active life, and the first thing he did was to go to Vireaux, to look after the infant children whom the death of his brother had left unprovided. His disengagement from earth and his all-absorbing love of God had taken nothing from the tenderness of his human affections, and only increased

tenfold his desire to benefit spiritually those whom near relationship had rendered dependent on his help. He confided the orphans for the present to the care of their maternal aunt, who was living in the service of the Curé of Vireaux, promising to be a father to them. He kept his word, and placed these little girls, when older, with the Ursuline nuns at Corbigny in the diocese of Nevers but not far removed from the Pierre-qui-Vire, where they had the benefit of a thoroughly Christian education. When he had finished his charitable work towards his kindred at his native village he was able to give all his thoughts to the adopted family which Providence was preparing for him. He went straight to the Morvand to see what progress the workmen were making with the building, and to ascertain if his orders had been strictly followed. He met with the most generous hospitality from the Curé of St. Léger-Vauban, whose church and presbytery were about a mile distant from the monastery in course of erection. If P. Muard had originally cast his eyes about in the parish of St. Germain-des-Champs for a suitable site, attracted by the vicinity of an excellent priest in the person of the Abbé Cullin, upon whose co-operation he could fully rely, he was to find that he had lost nothing by his ultimate choice, for the Curé of St. Léger, the Abbé Lavancy, was equally zealous for the work, which he continued to promote by every means in his power even after the death of the venerable founder, whom he survived some years.

When P. Muard had sufficiently set things in order at the Pierre-qui-Vire, he felt free to return to Aiguebelle, and this he was enabled to do all the sooner because the family of Chastellux placed their man of business, M. Faivre de Rouvray, at his disposal, one

whose probity and capacity for superintendence were beyond dispute. He promised from time to time to visit the Pierre-qui-Vire and act as a kind of clerk of the works. Accordingly, early in October P. Muard was able to write to P. Benoit that he had the happiness of being able to announce to his dear friends, that at last he should be with them in a few days. He hoped to arrive at Montélimart on Saturday the 13th of the month, by the steamboat. He reserved all details till they should meet. "Oh, how I rejoice," he says, "at the prospect of once more beholding and inhabiting that holy house of Aiguebelle! I have been absent from it in body, but I had left my heart and my thoughts there. Present the homage of my filial affection to the Reverend Father Abbot; and tell him how happy I shall be to place myself under the direction of so wise and so good a master."

CHAPTER XXIII.

Noviciate at Aiguebelle.

P. Muard had for a long time entertained a strong desire to visit the tomb of the Blessed Margaret Mary at the convent of the Nuns of the Visitation at Paray-le-Monial, and now his journey to Aiguebelle furnished him with the opportunity. His veneration for that holy soul can be well understood when we remember his ardent devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and the marvellous favours he had received from that Divine Heart. His pressing solicitations obtained from the Bishop of Autun for himself and the pious friend who accompanied him, the same who had tended him in his illness, permission to enter within the enclosure, a boon

not readily granted. He was thus enabled to kneel at all those holy spots which are for ever consecrated by the remembrance of the visions and revelations with which Margaret Mary was favoured, and especially at her tomb. As they were leaving the enclosure his pious companion observed to him that the time granted to them to pray there had seemed very short; he replied that truly it had been short, but that he came away happy, because he had made an agreement with that blessed one that she would be a second mother to the institute which he was labouring to found, our Lady being its first and rightful mother. Had he lived to see Margaret Mary canonized it is certain that he would have formally adopted her as the second patroness of his religious house.

He never ceased to speak of his pilgrimage to Paray-le-Monial with delight, for there was no devotion so dear to him as devotion to the Sacred Heart, and he always felt a peculiar union with those souls who shared it. When therefore, in the year 1850, at the Provincial Council held at Sens, a decree was promulgated by which that ecclesiastical province was consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus along with all the parishes and communities which it contained, his joy was unbounded. After satisfying his devotion at Paray-le-Monial he proceeded to Lyons. The *conducteur* of the vehicle having told him that they would arrive by eleven o'clock in the evening, he had reckoned upon saying his vespers at the end of the journey. When, however, he found that it was close upon midnight when they reached their destination he was much vexed, and, in all simplicity, consulted his friends at La Trappe on his arrival there as to whether he had committed a sin by this omission of vespers and compline. He hoped,

however, that it could not be a mortal one, since the circumstance which caused the delay was quite unforeseen both by himself and by the driver, namely, the badness of the road. One of them asked him why he did not recite from memory the Psalms included in this portion of his office. To recite them, he rejoined, one must know them, and it was questionable whether he could repeat so much as the *Magnificat* accurately by heart.

He had a great deal to communicate to P. Benoit concerning all that had taken place during his absence in the diocese of Sens, which had been so much longer than he had anticipated. In speaking of his late dangerous illness P. Benoit told him that, had it pleased God to call him to Himself, his own mind had been fully made up to remain with the Trappists of Aiguebelle, if they would consent to keep him; and that, even now, it would require little persuasion to induce him to do so. "You are restored to health," he said; "your work is begun, and is known; you have at this moment a priest who has exercised the functions of the holy ministry"—he alluded to the Abbé Moreau—"and who is more fitted than I am to aid you?" But P. Muard would not agree to this. No one felt more admiration than he himself did for the life of La Trappe, but their own proposed work had a wider scope. They were not only to labour for their personal sanctification in the interior of their monastery, but they were also to sanctify themselves by labouring for the salvation of others. "No," he said, "you will not remain at La Trappe; you will prosecute with me the work we have commenced." He added that he had himself made the sacrifice of his life, when ill of the cholera, but God did not accept it; He was content with the offer which he

had sincerely made. In like manner he would not accept the offer which P. Benoit made of himself for La Trappe. P. Muard then proceeded to speak in detail of the necessary differences which must exist between their rule and that of La Trappe, from which, however, they would borrow whatever was suitable to their mode of life. "There are things here," he said, "in themselves excellent, which we could not practise. We could not sing the Divine Offices in as solemn a manner, we could not give ourselves up to manual labour for so prolonged a time, for we have need to study theology and to compose sermons for the evangelization of poor sinners in country districts: it is for them that we are to preach; the towns will always have a sufficiency of preachers."

He noticed some other practices which they would be unable to observe, such as the rigorous fast from the fourteenth of September till Easter. P. Muard never varied in a clear expression of his views as to the formation of his congregation. This is why he had said to the Abbé Defazy, when speaking to him of the reform of P. Casaretto, "I cannot associate myself to it, for we have a special mission to fulfil". So now he said, "We are not Trappists, although we are being trained here for the religious life". He wished to adopt much from their usages and, in particular, their vestments, although in the matter of colour he preferred black to white, as being more penitential, and also as being less striking to the eye and less liable to soil. In memory of the cross of Migné he wished them to wear a red cross on their breast and also to have a simple red cross in each of their cells, not bearing the image of the Crucified, because he desired that each religious should in spirit substitute himself, seeing that

his life was to be a cross both continually and in all things.*

A little circumstance related of him at this period may here be mentioned as an instance of his combined severity to himself and tender indulgence for others. One morning when an icy cold wind was blowing, he, along with some of the other religious, was occupied in manual labour in one of the woods belonging to the monastery. He had scarcely recovered his usual strength after the attack of cholera, and was shivering all over, yet he never thought of asking for a dispensation, but went on labouring, in the joy of the Holy Spirit, as the Abbot said, as long as the young monks. However, when they had all returned to their cells P. Muard said, "If I had been superior, I should have brought back those religious to the monastery. Later on, when we are settled in our convent, should we find ourselves in like case we must not hesitate to stop the work. For I saw with pain most of those religious, who were fasting and had been up since two o'clock in the morning, trembling with the cold, notwithstanding their ardour

* The Abbé Brullée gives a different reason for his adoption of this cross. He says that, having fallen one day into a state of deep recollection while engaged in prayer, he felt himself to be in presence of his Lord, who at first remained silent. He said, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant hearkeneth". Still Jesus kept silence. Then a kind of fear took possession of him, and he seemed to see a large cross all red with blood and bearing the marks of the nails. It appeared suspended in the air and surrounded with rays. At first he knew not what this signified, but after a while he had the impression that our Lord meant to intimate to him the sufferings and tribulations which were in store for him. Then our Lord appeared to him carrying His Cross, and said that it was by crosses alone He could be pleased. The two accounts are by no means irreconcilable.

to work in order to keep their rule, and also to warm themselves somewhat." He desired austerities, but not to an excessive degree, and wished everything to be carefully tested. It must not be supposed that this holy man made the above remark in any spirit of criticism, from which he was far removed, but it must be remembered that he was engaged in observing accurately what could be done with prudence, in order to accommodate his proposed rule to the exigencies of nature. Nothing could exceed the terms of admiration in which he expressed himself in his letters concerning the revered Abbot and his religious, whom he considered to be leading the lives of angels on earth, or of his own delight at finding himself amongst them, and especially in being able to submit himself to entire obedience, which was to him a Paradise and the place of his repose, because it was thither that his profound humility drew him. "Oh, how beautiful," he writes to his former disciples at Pontigny, "does the religious life appear as witnessed at La Trappe! I always loved it, I always desired it, but, since I have learned to know it a little here, I love and passionately desire it: my companions share these sentiments with me."

Speaking of the Trappists' practice of mortification, which in part he proposed to adopt, he observes that it is not as difficult as people in the world generally suppose. "What is most difficult at La Trappe," he says, "which they do not suspect, is the death to self at every moment, this continual immolation of self-will, this obedience, the most absolute that can be conceived, an obedience which rules not only all actions, but even the mode of performing them, down to the smallest detail, so that there is not an instant of his life in which a Trappist can say, 'I am doing my own will'.

There is but one will here, that of God, manifested by the voice of the superior; and, indeed, it is a ravishing spectacle to see the manner in which everything in this house is done." In another letter he recurs to the happiness and repose he enjoys in this holy house of Aiguebelle, which he considers to be an image of Heaven, if one is to be found upon earth. He says that on arriving he found his companions much advanced in the interior life and ardently desirous to make daily progress. The Abbot had spoken most highly of them. "May the Lord be blessed," he adds; "while I was occupied with material stones God was Himself fashioning the living stones." He considered that they had left him far behind. "I am," he said, "like one of those scholars who, having been absent a year from the college, find themselves the last in their class. I am greatly behindhand, and the last of all, I do not say of the religious, for with them I dare not compare myself, but of my companions. Pray, then, for me as fervently as you can, that I may repair lost time and rejoin those who are so far ahead of me."

We are naturally little disposed to accept P. Muard's poor account of himself, and only quote his words as exhibiting his humility. Let us turn, therefore, to the portrait drawn of him by the Abbot Orsise in after years. "Everything in the behaviour of P. Jean-Baptiste Muard, while I had the happiness of having him under my direction, singularly edified me. He began his noviciate with the fervour which St. Bernard requires: *si incipis, fortiter incipe;* and his virtues shone with increasing lustre as he neared the time when, like another St. John the Baptist, he was to emerge from the desert to go and preach penance by his example and by the unction of his words. He

placed himself below all his brethren; he seemed in a way timid in their presence; his respect for his superiors and even for his equals arrived at veneration. He spoke little, even to his superiors, except when manifesting his interior to his spiritual father, and his words then were replete with the gravity and humility of the ancient Fathers of the desert. All know with what simplicity he accused himself in his turn when I held the chapter of faults. I seem still to see the manner, the air, and that indescribable expression of the supernatural in the person of P. Muard which struck every one and made him resemble the little child of whom our Lord speaks in the Gospel. He believed himself to be quite unfitted for the work with which God had entrusted him, and yet he was full of hope and courage and ready for all sacrifices to carry it on, so convinced was he that the Lord demanded it of him. The deeper his humility, the greater was his confidence and indomitable courage, because he leaned on God alone, who had clearly shown him, whether by interior lights or by different events, that he was to institute the kind of life which his children have the happiness of leading. He had no doubt on this subject; I think he even said that God had been asking it of him for ten years. Although he did not make his noviciate with the view of remaining in the monastery, nevertheless he would not have accepted the least dispensation or distinction in regard to himself. He was exact in all those practices of the house which were most humiliating and irksome. 'We must train ourselves well for the religious life,' he used to say, 'and that is almost entirely included in obedience and fidelity to the rule.' What was specially edifying in his obedience was his sweet smile, his look of tran-

quillity, which never varied. I do not remember having ever remarked in him the slightest movement of impatience; he was never disquieted, nothing was able to disturb him, because he was so united to God that in everything he saw His holy will and the hand of His admirable Providence. As for his love of poverty and of penance, he exercised himself in these two virtues with so much the more ardour in that he desired that they should form the walls of the edifice of the Pierre-qui-Vire, of which humility was to be the immovable foundation."

"I have known few men so united to God and so dead to themselves," says another witness, "as the venerable founder of Sainte Marie de la Pierre-qui-Vire. The confidence with which he was pleased to honour me gave me the opportunity of appreciating at their just value the great talents which Heaven had bestowed upon him for the direction of souls; but, as for particular facts, I have almost none to state, so careful was this man of God to evade the eyes of men. His behaviour during the few months that we had the happiness of possessing him was most edifying. Seeking distinction in nothing from others, doing nothing that was peculiar, but content with following the exercises of the community, he limited himself to the performance of common duties in an uncommon manner. Endowed with a rare humility, he obeyed like a little child all the orders of his superiors, and with as much punctuality and simplicity as might the humblest of novices." He adds, as an instance, that one day he came to the laboratory, or workroom, and knelt before one of the superiors to beg permission to write a letter, which greatly edified all present, inasmuch as, not belonging to the community, he was not

bound to ask leave. But in everything he conformed himself to their regulations, never writing a letter without permission and giving his own unsealed to the Abbot. He generally committed them to P. Benoit to take into the interior of the monastery, where he never himself appeared save to go to the refectory and to attend the lecture before Compline, wishing to escape the observation of the Brethren, who held him in marked respect.

His desire was to follow the rule to its utmost extent, but few, comparatively, of the Trappists themselves were able to keep the rigid fast already alluded to, which allowed only one meal at half-past two in the day from the middle of September to Easter. Those who were not able—and they were the majority—were allowed a certain quantity of bread and of soup made from bread in the morning. P. Muard's companions, of course, shared this indulgence, but he himself was able to carry out the more severe regimen, although at one time he was distressed by a feeling of hunger which he regarded as a temptation; he prayed our Lady to remove it, and obtained his request. He joined with quite a juvenile alacrity in the manual labour of various kinds in which the community were daily engaged. "If some pious persons who know me," he one day remarked to P. Benoit, "were to see me thus engaged, they would say I had much better occupy myself with souls, in the way either of preaching or of direction, and that by so doing I should make myself much more useful than by working as I am at this moment. But I should tell them that St. Paul was much more useful than I am to the infant Churches which he had founded throughout the world, and yet he remained shut up in prison two years, unable to

look after these Churches or the faithful comprising them." "When," observes the narrator, "we look into the lives of the saints, we almost always find either that they themselves retired into solitude for a season, in order to re-invigorate themselves in spirit for God's service, or that God Himself so disposed circumstances that they should do so, or compelled them to suspend their active ministry by sending them sickness, persecution, or some other hindrance; and thus also He dealt with His servant whom He had chosen to found a new religious house."

Sometimes the Abbot did not allow P. Muard to go to work with the rest, but kept him in his cell, either to revise his constitutions, or to write his letters or compose sermons. He read to the Abbot everything he wrote, having the same confidence in him that he had felt for the Abbot Defazy, and seeking light everywhere. One day at La Trappe resembles another, but this peaceful routine, as regarded P. Muard, was very near being rudely brought to a close had not Providence come to the rescue. Soon after his return to Aiguebelle, the Bishop of Valence, as delegate of the Holy See, came to hold a canonical visitation there. Some religious who were ill disposed towards the Abbot Orsise took advantage of this opportunity to accuse him of having admitted P. Muard and his associates to follow some of the community exercises. The Bishop, at the commencement of his visitation, said to the Abbot, "We will arrange that affair at the close". He even added that, in all probability, those three priests from the diocese of Sens could not be allowed to remain at La Trappe. The three religious who had accused the Abbot of having exceeded his powers were, for some other cause, sent at this juncture to La

Trappe de Mortagne. Monseigneur was taken ill, which cut short the visitation, and not another word was said about the three priests from the diocese of Sens. Six weeks afterwards the Abbot said to P. Muard one day that it was due to the grace of God that he still had him and his companions there, for it had been pretty well decided that they would have to go.

This affair had caused the Abbot much anxiety, for it would have pained him deeply to part with his guests, but P. Muard was not to be without a sharp trial of his own about this time. It arose from the failure of a religious vocation which had been the subject of his prayers and advice, and this in a public manner which made it the talk of the social world to which the young lady belonged, and was also the occasion of animadversion to the prejudice of religion and the clergy. P. Muard who, as we know, never cared to justify himself personally thought it his duty in this case to take up his pen in order to vindicate his responsibility as a priest and explain his conduct. The following quotation from a letter of his reveals the state of his feelings at this trying juncture. "I can quite imagine," he writes, "all that may be said against priests in general, and against me in particular, since it was I who advised this step, and I am grieved that occasion should thus have arisen of offence to God. Yet, when I consider the purity of the motives which actuated me, I do not think myself much to blame, and, if I lacked prudence, I beg God's forgiveness. On the other hand, I rejoice at the censure I have incurred, a censure which recoils on our work, because blame, contempt, and persecutions are blessings to infant institutions; and then, I must confess, I was in a way sorry to see myself too high in men's esteem, for that

is not the road by which saints have passed. Wherefore I am well pleased that this ill-founded esteem should be changed into contempt, which will be for the glory of God and my own profit." If the young lady had followed her director's judicious advice and quietly tested her vocation, instead of yielding to natural impulse and giving free reins to her tongue, the annoyances and much of the mischief which ensued would have been spared to all parties.

Trials in the case of the servant of God were very commonly followed or accompanied by peculiar favours. It was so in this instance. Early in December, when he was making his meditation in the tribune of the church, he had a vision which he related on the following day to his associate, P. Benoit. The Blessed Virgin, accompanied by St. John the Baptist, his guardian-angel, and the Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque, appeared to him to confer on him the name he was to bear in religion. As well as P. Benoit could remember, he said that the Blessed Virgin was in front of him having on her right hand the Great Precursor and on her left his angel-guardian, the Blessed Margaret Mary being at St. John's right hand. He was henceforth to be called Père Jean-Baptiste of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Thus he was to preserve his baptismal name, which seems to have been given to him prophetically. He had been asking two favours of our Lord through the intercession of His Immaculate Mother during a novena preceding her festival on the 8th of the month. To one of these we have already alluded, his deliverance from the temptation of hunger; and he told his faithful companion that he had also obtained his other request, which regarded a temporal matter, the only temporal matter in which he interested himself,

the construction of his monastery. On that very day he had received a letter apprizing him that a very considerable sum (2,000 francs) had been contributed towards its erection.

Soon after our Lady's gracious visit to him, our Divine Lord once more spoke to him one of those interior words of which it surpasses the power of human language to describe the effect. It occurred while he was making his thanksgiving after celebrating Mass, his soul, with all his faculties, being, as on former similar occasions, in a state of passive repose. "I desire from this day forth," said our Lord, "that you should serve Me with the most perfect liberty of spirit. I desire that you should abandon yourself to me entirely in all which concerns you." This self-abandonment, which we have not unfrequently noticed as so specially characterising this holy man, was thus every day deepening more and more under the influence of divine grace and of the supernatural communications vouchsafed to him. The Benedictine device, *Pax*, might truly be esteemed as his peculiar motto. If, therefore, he prayed for material help to carry out the work with which he had been intrusted, it was with neither anxiety, doubt, nor distrust. The following remarks in a letter written about this period are evidently dictated by the strong impression produced upon him by the interior word which our Lord had spoken to him.

"Little by little," he says, "with God's help, we shall accomplish the building of our monastery. Much, still, it is true, remains to be done, but God is so good that I have the most absolute reliance on Him; and then I can frankly tell you that the most perfect abandonment into the hands of God for all that regards

our work, both spiritually and temporally, as also for all that personally concerns myself, is the virtue most dear to me, and one which I most earnestly beg the good God to grant me. Do you ask it for me also, I beseech you." His disengagement of heart was so great, even from his one interest on earth, that, when admiring the well-known saying of the great founder of the Company of Jesus, that he should only ask of God one quarter of an hour to regain his tranquillity should it please the Lord to destroy his institute, he added that he so completely entered into St. Ignatius's sentiments that he would not even ask for a minute before intoning a *Te Deum* in order to make a total and irrevocable sacrifice of his work. He was contented to see it disappear from under his eyes, so as it was not his own fault, but through the will of God. And yet for the success of that work he was ready to shed the last drop of his blood. Here is the source of his amazing tranquillity, and also of what people were pleased sometimes to consider as his slowness. It was always under the eye of God that he acted and regarded every event, whether unfavourable or propitious. To use a somewhat familiar term, he was never what is called fidgety. Fidgetiness is a terrible enemy to the interior life and to advancement in spirituality. It has its bad roots in our fallen nature, albeit some temperaments are more inculpably subject to its inroads than are others. Hence, although he must have felt and, indeed, knew that his presence was very desirable at the Pierre-qui-Vire, both to superintend the work and urge on the workmen, the happiness he enjoyed at La Trappe was not diminished by this reflection.

"Oh, how good it is to be here with the Trappists!" he writes. "These are my brightest days, which are now

flowing on and passing with a surprising celerity. It will soon be two months since I left Avallon, and it seems as if I had only arrived yesterday. Continue to pray for me, that I may make full use of the time which I shall pass in this monastery. How I desire to sanctify myself here, and repair the years lost in the world!" In the same letter, however, he gives proof of the minute interest he takes in the furniture which his pious friends at Avallon were exerting themselves to provide both for the monastic house and for its chapel. He descends into the smallest details, and desires that modesty and simplicity should everywhere prevail. He refuses even to have any gilding employed in the frame of a picture of the Sacred Heart which had been painted for him, as being more conformable to holy poverty. Proceeding on this principle, he declines accepting, even for the sanctuary, ornaments of a rich character which devout persons might be disposed to offer, and on this subject he enters into the fullest particulars. Neither the altar furniture nor the linen employed in the Holy Sacrifice must be costly in point of material. Simplicity, accompanied by the most perfect cleanliness, must characterize all. He did not wish for splendour and magnificence even in the sacred vessels; and this, not because he did not fully appreciate and delight in the glory and beauty of God's House, or esteem anything too costly or precious for its adornment, especially as regarded the altar and the Holy Sacrifice, but because he considered that the absolute poverty which his congregation was to profess and exhibit made any rich display inappropriate in its very worship.

The eagerness with which his friends at Avallon responded to all his desires and requests filled P.

Muard's heart with gratitude; first to his dear Lord, who never failed him in his needs, and next to the pious souls who laboured with such untiring zeal and charity to aid him. Gratitude, indeed, was always in him a pre-eminent virtue, corresponding to, and, as it were, the complement of, his forgiveness of injuries. But, if he was thankful for the material aid given him in his work, much more did he value the prayers offered in his behalf. Oh, what need," he exclaims, "I have of graces, of succour, of prayers!" There was, he says, an urgent necessity for him to become a saint if he would not be an utter reprobate. "I conjure you, then," he continues, "O fervent souls, by the love which you bear to our Divine Saviour, by that ardent zeal with which the glory of God inspires you, do not forget me in your supplications. This is the greatest service you can render me, and that which is most agreeable to me, for it will not be for my sanctification alone that you will be praying but for the sanctification of many thousands of others bound up intimately with mine. Here, surely, is enough to stimulate your zeal. Be sure you will not oblige one who is ungrateful, for you have a share in all that I do; not a single action but you are included in the offering which I make of it to our God."

At La Trappe d'Aiguebelle the religious not only made their habits themselves but also the materials of which they were manufactured, so that nothing had to be purchased, as their own sheep furnished them with wool for the purpose. All this the Father carefully observed, hoping hereafter to be able to utilise his experience in favour of his own community. For the same reason he examined attentively the mode in which the Trappists made vermicelli and maccaroni, similar to

what is so common an article of food in Italy. Nothing escaped his observation, as he was most desirous to cull everything from the practice and rules of these solitaries which could be profitably adopted in his own case. Meanwhile his soul seemed to flourish in this Thebaid. He was like the tree planted by the water-side, sweetly and silently imbibing spiritual nourishment, and here willingly would he have struck his roots and remained for ever but for his other attraction and corresponding call, the evangelization of souls. The active and the contemplative, as we know, were to be combined in his community.

The Abbot Orsise would often find time, notwithstanding his numerous occupations, to give his novices some private instruction, and especially such advice to P. Muard as would aid him in the administration of a religious community, an office requiring great prudence and abnegation. "I have to obey here," he said, "and you will find that on the majority of occasions you, too, will have to obey." P. Muard had already learned this truth in a measure from his experience in the infant community at Pontigny. So true is it that he that would be chief must really be the servant of all. He was able to go through the severe Lent observed by the Trappists, along with four or five of the monks who alone were capable of keeping it without some slight mitigation. This can scarcely surprise us when we remember the arduous manual labour in which they are engaged for so many hours of the day, which with them begins in what we should call night. Their fatigue was necessarily greater even than that of P. Muard, who, though he shared their labours, had not, like them, to sing office. In either case the fast was such as unsupported human nature might well recoil

from, but the servant of God felt more than ever the need of doing violence to Heaven in order to win by his prayers and penances that amount of graces which his new situation appeared to him to render indispensable. He passed the last three days of Holy Week in such a state of profound recollection that he seemed scarcely to touch the earth, so filled was his soul with the august mysteries then celebrated and with his all-absorbing meditation on the sufferings of the Man-God.

A few weeks after Easter the time of his departure had arrived, and his six months' noviciate was closed. The memory of that time was most dear to him for the remainder of his life. It was cherished religiously also by the monks of La Trappe, upon whom he had made so deep an impression. The following quotation from the Annals of the Abbey, written in 1864, will serve as a proof of this, and will also exhibit the sentiments of affectionate union which were to continue to subsist between La Trappe d'Aiguebelle and the Pierre-qui-Vire. "We have not here to record," says the writer, "the happiness which the Founder of the Pierre-qui-Vire tasted during his six months' noviciate, too short as he esteemed it for his thirst of perfection, nor the deep and ineffaceable impression which he left in the community by his regularity, his fervour, his mortification, and, in one word, by the practice of the humblest and most austere virtues; only we rejoice to be able to say that from the close of his noviciate until his death the Reverend Père Muard never ceased to regard himself as a child of Aiguebelle, and always maintained with Dom Orsise and with his successor, Dom Bonaventure, the most intimate and affectionate relations. Gratitude did not even expire with him, it has survived in the hearts of his fervent and zealous disciples, the

inheritors of his sentiments and of his spirit; and we have the sweet hope that, if this great servant of God is one day raised to the altars, his glory and the happy effects of his intercession, while manifesting themselves first to his beloved congregation, will also be reflected on the humble monastery which his children always love to regard as their early cradle" (*Annals of the Abbey of Aiguebelle*, tome ii. p. 318).

CHAPTER XXIV.

Pilgrimage to La Salette. Building of the Monastery.

It was with deep regret that P. Muard prepared to bid adieu to the holy solitude of Aiguebelle, a regret which was increased by the persuasion that he was still very poorly provided, both in virtue and in knowledge, for the position which he was now called to occupy. But it was impossible to delay his return any longer, for the work at the Pierre-qui-Vire was suffering from his absence. The Archbishop of Sens was also expressing anxiety to see him settled in his monastery, that he might begin to labour for the sanctification of souls. The Abbot Orsise had provided all which he and his companions would need in the way of clothing and other necessary articles against their departure. P. Muard had handed over to him four hundred francs on his return from the diocese of Sens, and he insisted afterwards on making an addition to this sum in order to reimburse him for the expenses he had incurred on their behalf. His conscientiousness is further exemplified in a circumstance mentioned by P. Benoit, namely,

that he said a certain number of Masses with the intention of supplying for any which he might possibly have forgotten in the past. He had now a debt to discharge to his dear Mother. She had performed her part: she had restored him to health, and fulfilled the condition he had made with her. Not one of the persons who tended him during the cholera had caught the infection; accordingly he prepared to accomplish his vow of a pilgrimage to La Salette before taking his way to his future home. For the present he left the two priests at Aiguebelle, taking with him as his companions the two Lay-Brothers, Maurus and Marie. After blessing PP. Benoit and Bernard (the Abbé Moreau), and himself receiving with deep emotion that of the Abbot Orsise, he turned his face from his beloved retreat, which full often he was to revisit in spirit and of which he was never to speak but as that "holy house".

It was the close of April, and the pilgrims had to encounter severe cold on the hills of Dauphiné, where winter still held sway. P. Muard afterwards said he could not recommend any one to make that pedestrian journey at so early a season. We may gather from this observation that they had much to endure, which however, the good Father only regretted on account of his companions. Sufferings and penances were, indeed, his valued treasures, but he never thought of imposing the like on others. Not a grain of compassion was ever reserved for himself. At La Salette itself it was bitterly cold. But nothing could chill the fervour with which he worshipped on the mountain which has been for ever consecrated by the feet of Mary, and poured forth his thanks and his petitions. "The happiness," he writes, "which we have enjoyed on that holy hill, notwithstanding the frost and snow

which still reign in these upland regions, made ample amends to us for the fatigues of the journey. There we prayed to our good Mother with our whole heart, there we renewed to her the offering of ourselves and of our infant community, that she may herself offer it to her Divine Son; there we prayed for all our benefactors, spiritual and temporal, for all who interest themselves in our work. We did not forget our mother, the holy community of Aiguebelle, and our very Reverend Father, Dom Orsise; we prayed the Blessed Virgin to repay a hundredfold to that good Father and to his worthy children all the good which they have done to us."

He then proceeds to say how he had visited the Archbishop of Sens at Auxerre and was most favourably received. That prelate expressed himself as very grateful for all that the community of Aiguebelle had done for P. Muard, and as ready to grant all that he might request. "He has named," says the Father, "the Archpriest at Avallon, our friend and the most ardent promoter of our work, to receive our vows in his name as soon as our house shall be habitable." The monastery at the Pierre-qui-Vire was, however, still far from habitable. As yet there was nothing except what may be called its skeleton. But P. Muard met with the most cordial hospitality from the Curé of St. Léger-Vauban, whose zeal for him and his work was warmly seconded by his two sisters, who lived with him. A few days later, on the 23rd of May, his four associates joined him from Aiguebelle, and the good Curé insisted on lodging them also. Glad, indeed, were they to be once more united. "On that ever-blessed day, 23rd of May, 1850," writes P. Benoit, "we said, Here we will live and here we will die, if such be

the will of God. Nothing but obedience or death can separate us as regards the body; as to the soul, never. The thoughts of Heaven which have hitherto supported us will continue to do so in this new mode of life."

They began at once to put it in practice, which, in fact, was but to continue their life of La Trappe. Every morning they rose at three o'clock and repaired to the church, where, after saying the *Veni Creator*, the three priests offered Mass, and then all proceeded in single file, still fasting, to the scene of their labours, P. Muard leading, and the rest following in the order of their age. They kept perfect silence, except when reciting the rosary together. The work to which they had to apply themselves resembled much that of settlers in the backwoods. They had to level ground and dig up the stumps and roots of the trees which had been cut down, and which yet remained even in the interior of the building, besides assisting the builders in all their various departments of masonry, carpenter-work, and the like. At midday they rested and partook of the dinner of soup and vegetables which the Curé's sisters daily prepared for them, and often brought with their own hands into the forest, Brother Marie always going to meet them halfway. Sometimes the Abbé Lavancy himself would perform this charitable office, and would then accompany the Brother to the scene of operations. After partaking of their meagre repast, rest was allowed until two o'clock, when they said vespers and compline, and then resumed their implements of toil. At the fall of day they gave over, and returned to the presbytery, walking in the same order as in the morning. On the first evening, the inhabitants of the parish, who had not yet seen them, stood gazing with some little wonder at the silent pro-

cession, but they soon got used to them and took no notice. Little hostility seemed to prevail in the Morvand with regard to religious matters, but the inhabitants subsequently exhibited much indifference, as we shall see.

As at San Lorenzo di Fanello, P. Muard was always the first to rise and call the others, and the last to lie down to rest. At the Pierre-qui-Vire he had to take the lead in every department. He was architect, superintendent of works, and the most energetic of workmen, all in one. Sometimes he might be seen occupying the post of top-sawyer with Brother Maurus below in the sawpit. Soon after their return from Aiguebelle, he sent all his associates to pay a short visit to their families, which was desirable, if it were only to prove to their anxious relatives and to friends in the world that they were still alive and in good health, notwithstanding the austerities of La Trappe. The visit produced a very good impression. It was soon evident to P. Muard that, however hard they might work, it would be some months before they could possibly be installed in their monastery. Reluctant, however, to remain as a burden on the good Curé of St. Léger, willing as he might be to bear it, and desirous also to save his brethren the walk to and fro, which in all weathers they had to perform, and which necessarily added not a little to their fatigue, he bethought him of erecting a temporary shelter on the spot, where they could all take up their abode until the house was ready to receive them. No time was lost in constructing it, for it was but a simple shed of rough planks put together and thatched with straw. Interiorly it was divided into three compartments, one of which served them as a chapel, another as kitchen,

while between the two was their community-room, which was used by them successively as refectory, workshop, and dormitory for two of their number. Their beds were of a very primitive description. A board answered the purpose for P. Muard. A wooden case, with some straw in it, much resembling a coffin, accommodated another Father. The other three ascended by a ladder into a sort of loft, where the planks of the flooring furnished them with a bed ready to hand.

Even the furniture of the chapel spoke of poverty. It consisted of what the kindness of friends had been able to provide, and had been taken care of by Mlle. de Richerolles at Avallon until needed, or had been moved to the presbytery of St. Léger. A plain cross surmounted this modest habitation, which stood on the point of a rock, having at its foot a gurgling stream, which at other seasons of the year swelled into a boisterous torrent; but it was now summer, and the 2nd of July, the feast of the Visitation, was fixed for their instalment. There could not have been a more fitting day selected than that on which the Mother of God, their special Patroness, entered the house of Zacharias and Elizabeth to sanctify the unborn Precursor, the future preacher of penance, the great St. John the Baptist, in whose steps the founder of St. Marie de la Pierre-qui-Vire, Jean Baptiste Muard, and his disciples ardently and humbly desired to tread. It was a day of great spiritual joy to him and his little band, in which the few intimate friends who had been invited to attend the ceremony, among whom were the Curés of St. Léger and of St. Agnan, cordially participated. After the benediction of the little provisional chapel and the offering of Mass in it by P. Muard and

P. Benoit—P. Bernard being compelled to be absent, as he had to supply for the Curé of St. Léger in celebrating a marriage at his church—the guests partook of a frugal repast which Mlle. Lavancy had kindly prepared and brought. The anniversary of this day and the festival associated with it were always honoured by the founder with special observances.

From the very first Sunday after removing into their tent in the wilderness, the scattered population of the district came to hear Mass. The little chapel was full, and the greater number had to remain outside the open door. P. Muard never let them go away without addressing a few words of instruction and exhortation to these few poor sheep in the desert. The people listened attentively and in deep silence. As every Sunday an increased number of the neighbouring peasantry were seen debouching from the scarcely traceable paths of the adjoining forest, an idea struck the Father which, as the event proved, showed that he overestimated their religious earnestness. He was naturally desirous of providing these poor cottagers with the facility of fulfilling their obligation of attending Mass, which their distance from the nearest parish church at present rendered difficult; and his object was that this advantage should be permanently secured to them. Strict enclosure, however, such as is practised in all Benedictine monasteries which keep to their primitive rule, would be established as soon as their house was completed. No woman would then be permitted to enter its precincts save by exceptional permission on the part of ecclesiastical superiors. If, therefore, a Mass was still to be said for the public there must be a chapel outside the convent enclosure. Accordingly, one Sunday morning P. Muard made a

proposal to his assembled listeners. "As you all," he said, "live at a distance from your respective parish churches, Quarré-les-Tombes and St. Léger-Vauban, we purpose to erect a chapel at our monastery gate. I solicit the assistance of you all, some in preparing the ground, others in collecting the materials, and others, again, in carrying them to the spot. We will undertake the entire expense of the building and of its internal decoration."

He was not well acquainted as yet with the character of the Morvand population. Indifference largely prevailed, and though the faith had, generally speaking, not been lost, it was mostly a dead faith, or, at least, a faith too languid to produce any fruits of self-sacrifice. Only one family responded to his invitation; its obscure name, Sureau des Valtats, merits therefore a record. This chapel took two years to build and render fit for the celebration of the holy mysteries.

Under the immediate superintendence of P. Muard the construction of the monastery was pushed on energetically. The workmen, who previous to his arrival were dilatory and languid in their proceedings, now laboured diligently, so great was the ascendency which his gentleness and goodness had obtained over them. And the labour was very hard, involving the demolishing of granite rocks and the digging out the roots of huge trees, in all which toil P. Muard took his full share. He had to work with head as well as hand, for it was he who planned as well as aided in executing all the interior arrangement of the building. He had also to go occasionally to Avallon or to Sens on business connected with the undertaking.

All went on so well that he was able to attend the usual ecclesiastical retreat at Sens, but he had scarcely

returned to the Pierre-qui-Vire when he received a letter from the Marquise de Chastellux telling him that P. Ravignan, who was at that time the theologian of the Bishop of Moulins, had the strongest desire to make his acquaintance. He was obliged in consequence to retrace his steps to Sens, where these two holy men had more than one interview and, from their very first meeting, were drawn together by a spiritual instinct and reciprocal attraction. In short, they at once understood each other, and P. Muard communicated to the illustrious Jesuit the whole plan and object of his undertaking. P. Ravignan was particularly struck with the idea of uniting expiation with preaching, and he several times assured P. Muard emphatically that his work was the work of God, and encouraged him to advance fearlessly. The society he was founding would receive the Divine blessing and would effect great good for souls. Besides the lively satisfaction which P. Muard derived from this meeting, his return to Sens procured him the great joy of being present at the council held in that city, when the whole province of Sens was solemnly consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. We learn from a letter addressed later to the Marquise de Chastellux by P. Ravignan, after P. Muard had taken his vows, the impression he had retained of the servant of God, and the high esteem in which he held his undertaking. "How I thank you," he writes, "for having sent me an account of the assumption of the habit and the consecration of those holy religious! The sight and conversation of P. Muard had deeply affected me at Sens; my whole soul felt drawn towards his; may we remain united! Yes, expiation must be joined to preaching, prayer to Christian works; I feel this more than ever."

The great day to which we have by anticipation alluded was fixed for the 3rd of October, but before that date the approach of winter had begun to make itself felt in the Morvand, where it may be said there is scarcely any spring or autumn, the heat of summer being rapidly succeeded by winter's frost. P. Muard and his companions began to suffer much from the cold in their ill-constructed shed, whose planks let in the outer air at all their imperfect joinings. In the early morning they could hardly see to read their office, although closely clustered round their flickering lamp, which, notwithstanding all their devices to protect it from the frequent gusts of wind, was every moment threatened with extinction. Not one of the group, however, could have ventured to utter a word of complaint when they beheld the sweet serenity which shone in their revered founder's face. To suffer for God was his delight, and of all penances he much preferred those which come to us direct from His hands to such as we voluntarily take upon ourselves, seeing that in these last vanity in some subtle form may secretly insinuate itself. About this time, P. Benoit tells us, they received as novice a young man, designated only as Frère Jean, who had suffered many trials from his family, in spite of which, however, he never swerved from his vocation, and became a most satisfactory religious.

The indefatigable exertions of P. Muard and his companions had at last completed the building of which they were about to take possession. It was, as we have already said, situated in a perfect solitude, having no habitation near it on any side, and stood on the confines of the three dioceses of Sens, Nevers, and Dijon. There was no regular approach, and it was along rugged and tortuous paths that the pilgrim by the aid of a

guide would have to find his way. As he drew near he would behold a tongue of land, raised upon precipitous rocks projecting in the centre of a deep valley, through which rushed a torrent, sometimes visible and anon disappearing amidst granite boulders intermingled in wild confusion with the trunks of uprooted trees. Upon this eminence, separated on the right hand and on the left from the rest of the hill by a deep gorge, stood the monastery, the whiteness of its walls and its red-tiled roof contrasting strongly with the verdure of the surrounding forest. A little belfry, surmounted by a cross, marked its monastic character. On reaching the door his eye would again rest on the sign of salvation, and he would read inscribed these words of the Gospel: *Si quis vult post me venire, abneget seipsum, et tollat crucem suam, et sequatur me. Jugum meum suave est, et onus meum leve.**

The monastery itself was not large, but it comprised all the requisites of such an establishment: chapel, chapter-hall, refectory, kitchen, cells for the members, court, and garden. The accommodation of guests also entered into its plan, and an external chapel was in course of construction, as we have seen. Such was the monastery of Sainte Marie de la Pierre-qui-Vire, placed in this austere solitude, where nothing met the eye, so far as its restricted horizon extended, except the dense forest, and where silence was unbroken save by the song of birds, the brawling of the Trinclin below, and its own bell. Monks devoting themselves to agriculture have commonly selected as sites for their religious houses plains suitable for fertilization, through which flowed some peaceful stream, while the institutors of monastic orders dedicated to penance have preferred to take up

* St. Matthew xvi. 24. St. Luke ix. 23.

their abode in spots where nature is more wild and rugged, not only as harmonizing more perfectly with the spirit of their vocation, but as isolating them more completely, by their less accessible character, from the seductions of a world which they wished to remember only to immolate themselves by their austerities for its salvation. Such a retreat P. Muard had dreamed of and desired for long years, and such at last he had found.

CHAPTER XXV.

The Rule and Constitutions. Solemn Profession of the Community.

Having spoken of the material fabric we must now say a few words of the moral and spiritual edifice, that is, of the rule and constitutions which were to mould the life of its inmates and to the observance of which they were about to bind themselves by vow. It would be impossible for us to insert them at length. Want of space also prohibits any lengthened quotation; we must therefore content ourselves with a brief glance at them. Much of their spirit, and even a portion of their literal injunctions, will already have been gathered from previous remarks. It was the Rule of St. Benedict, as we have seen, in its strict primitive observance, which was to be followed, practices and customs being chiefly adopted from those of Aiguebelle. The whole had been drawn up and elaborated by P. Muard in his hours of solitude at San Lorenzo's hermitage and in his cell at La Trappe. It was preceded by an Introduction addressed to his dear brethren, which, with the Rules, he now read to them assembled in Chapter. This

Introduction gave them a simple account of the views which had so long occupied his mind concerning the needs of society threatening to fall into a state of dissolution worse than Paganism; of the vision and revelation vouchsafed to him on the road from Venouze, and the struggles which he mentally endured on the subject. With all this we are already familar; no further notice is therefore required, but we will quote a few passages which strongly mark the reverential esteem in which he held the ancient rule of the great Patriarch of the West.

After having recorded the manner in which Providence led him to the celebrated grotto of St. Benedict, he adds, "I desired to find a rule ready made, knowing myself to be supremely incapable and unworthy of undertaking such a task. I desired an ancient rule, because the ancient rules have a perfume of holiness, not to be met with in the same degree in the more recent, because they have the sanction of time and experience; in fine, because there is in our age a tendency to revert to the old monastic usages. Now, among the most ancient rules, that of St. Benedict comprises for us all desirable conditions. It presents itself as the child of the most perfect of the early Eastern and as the parent of all the Western rules; as the sacred code which has dominated the monastic world for 1,400 years; as of all rules the most venerable, from the profound wisdom and eminent sanctity which shine in its every page, from the perfection of the religious life which it establishes both in its divinely ordered general plan and in its admirable details. It is the most illustrious, by the countless number of saints with which it has enriched Heaven; by the priceless services which it has rendered to the Church and to the world, parti-

cularly in the ages of ignorance and barbarism, when it saved from total ruin the sacred traditions of the past, the precious works of the holy Fathers and the literary treasures of antiquity, affording them an asylum in the cloister; by the benefits it bestowed on society through its assiduous study of science, arts, and even agriculture, which it taught to the people, employing the profits realized in feeding a multitude of poor and in founding a vast number of useful establishments, particularly schools, so that it may be said that during several centuries the Order of St. Benedict was the Providence of society."

He then alludes to the favour with which it has been regarded by the most illustrious Pontiffs who have sat in the chair of Peter, and the privileges with which they have endowed it. Moreover, the veneration in which the Order was in a certain measure still generally held, rendered its re-establishment less difficult in France. But the crowning reason for its selection was the perfect agreement of the humble, poor, and mortified lives of these ancient religious with that which they desired to follow. Preachers were needed to evangelize the poor: now, it was this Order which for more than four centuries gave missionaries to the Church, who converted England and all the north of Europe, besides effecting countless conversions throughout the rest of the world. Men dedicated specially to prayer and study were also needed: now, it was the Order of St. Benedict which formed the majority of the contemplatives and learned men of the middle ages. Lay-brothers were also needed for the manual work; and in this rule we also find admirable details in all that concerns labour and the direction of the Brothers. The subjection of all

these various classes to the same observances, the only difference consisting in the occupation assigned to each, was what they needed as the means of maintaining in their house that unity which is the foundation-principle of every society; and such was furnished to them by the Rule of St. Benedict. In offering them this rule he presented to them the work of one of the greatest saints whom the Church glories in possessing, and one of the greatest legislators who have ever existed, or, rather, the work of God Himself, since it is held for certain that the Rule of St. Benedict was dictated to him by an angel.

As, however, every religious congregation has its special mission in the Church, according to the needs of the time when it makes its appearance, so also it must have its special physiognomy; and he proceeds to describe their own, with which we are already acquainted. He had, moreover, he said, placed their society under the patronage of the Divine Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, because the virtues by which it was to be especially characterized were the pre-eminent virtues of the Hearts of Jesus and of His Holy Mother, and, in order to enter more fully into the spirit of sacrifice and immolation of these Sacred Hearts, they made profession of a very special devotion to the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar and to the Passion of our Lord, the mysteries which manifest in the highest degree the thirst for expiation which burned in the Heart of our Divine Master. We need not enter particularly into the modifications which after long consideration and fervent prayer he had thought well to adopt, because, in the first place, we have already sufficiently described them, and in the second, because, as regards the rigid abstinence which

he and his first disciples followed, it was not continued after the constitutions had been submitted to Rome, subsequently to the founder's death, when they were assimilated in this respect, as in others, to the Benedictine primitive rule. In the meantime the marvel was for some years exhibited of men able, from the love of God and of souls, to combine so severe a regimen, not merely with manual labour, but with what is really far more exhausting, the work of missions; and this, we can have little doubt, entered into the designs of Divine Providence, God, we may well believe, having inspired His servant to make this notable and striking protest against the self-indulgence of the age. P. Muard, so ready to mistrust himself and adopt the counsels of men he revered, never varied on this point, that the will of God had been manifested to him too clearly to admit of a doubt, with reference both to this rigid abstinence and to absolute poverty.

To judge how severe this abstinence was, it is sufficient to enumerate the articles of diet from which the Benedictines of the Sacred Heart were to abstain at all times and in all places: 1. wine and all liquor; 2. every kind of flesh meat; 3. fish; 4. eggs; 5. butter and cheese; 6. oil; 7. sugar and honey. Their sole drink was to be water. This abstinence P. Muard had so strongly at heart that it was made the subject of a special vow; and, in order to facilitate its observance, the Benedictines when away from their monastery were, as much as possible, to take their meals apart, both to spare themselves all temptation and to preserve that spirit of recollection which social gatherings tend so strongly to disturb. Their life, in fact, was to include an entire renunciation of all the goods, the pleasures, and the honours of the world; an absolute

mortification, a perfect crucifixion, a life of penance and tears for their own sins and for the sins of others; a life which seems so hard to nature, and of which the flesh has so great a horror, but which in reality is the most beautiful in the eyes of faith. It was the life of the Apostles, he says, the life of Jesus Christ Himself; it is the double martyrdom of penance and charity, which is not less glorious than martyrdom for the faith, and, truly, what is there more beautiful, more sublime, than to immolate oneself daily by a continual voluntary death for the glory of God and the salvation of our brethren? The world, of course, will judge very differently, and will regard them with sovereign pity, as victims of enthusiasm and fanaticism, but what is the judgment of the world to them? They are willing to be fools for Christ's sake.*

Allusion has been already made to the spirit of poverty which was to prevail in their monastery, not excepting the furniture of their chapel. Much more, then, was it to be displayed in their refectory, their kitchen, and their cells, which were to be but eight or nine feet square, and to contain only a bed, a small table to write at, a stool without a back, and a wooden cross painted red. A few devotional pictures they might also have, unframed and fastened to the wall. Their woollen dress was to be of the commonest texture, which they were not to lay aside even when worn and patched. The same spirit of poverty was to prevent them when travelling from making use of either horse or carriage, unless in case of age or infirmities, or when the length of the journey to be accomplished within a short space of time rendered it necessary. The Benedictines of the Sacred Heart were, in fact, to consider

* Nos stulti propter Christum. 1 Cor. iv. 10.

themselves specially as the missionaries of the poor, *pauperibus evangelizare misit me Dominus ;** and in an age when poverty has fallen into contempt and the world has made a god of riches, they were to seek it out, to love it, to enthrone it in their house and, above all, in their hearts, making poverty their queen, and thus giving a practical denial to the erroneous judgment of men, who place the supreme felicity of life in wealth and in the enjoyments it procures.

Admirable are the founder's instructions on this subject, as also on those of apostolic zeal, obedience, union with God, fraternal charity, &c., but we must content ourselves with a quotation from his instructions on humility, that virtue which was so supremely dear to him as the basis of all other virtues, without which they are worthless and, as it were, built only on sand. "Children of the Heart of Jesus," he says, "we have taken as our device that dictum of the Adorable Heart: *Discite a Me, quia mitis sum et humilis corde ;* and those other words: *Ad majorem Dei gloriam per nostri humiliationem. Deus vult.*† Although our father, St. Benedict, has spoken so admirably to us of this virtue I will nevertheless say a few words about it. We have placed the divine and most holy humility, which was supereminently the virtue of the Heart of Jesus, as the foundation of our society, as the constituting principle of our spirit, and we wish it to be the distinctive character of our Congregation, whose chief end is to combat pride, which is the dominant vice of our age,

* St. Luke iv. 18.

† "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart. To the greater glory of God through the humiliation of ourselves. God wills."

by the practice of humility. It shall be to us the object of a special love, I might almost say worship. It must be deeply engraved in our hearts, imprinted on our foreheads as a divine seal, and must manifest itself in our words, in our actions, and in our whole behaviour, so that our life may, as it were, preach a continual sermon on humility.

"We must look upon ourselves as the last of religious, having only mean thoughts of ourselves, as miserable sinners worthy of every ignominy, and our society as the lowest of all. We must, therefore, never say anything to give a good opinion of our community, never rectify the false ideas which persons may entertain of us or of our manner of life (unless the glory of God evidently demands it), never write a word with this object, preferring to allow ourselves to be despised and trodden under foot. Let us make ourselves little, so little as not even to seem worthy of contempt, from whatever quarter it may come. Let us keep ourselves in spirit at the feet of all men; let us place our happiness and our glory in being contemned by all, after the example of our Divine Master, who was saturated with opprobrium and ignominy at the hands of all sorts of men. Let us sincerely love humiliations, not only for ourselves personally, but for our society also; let us reject with horror the praises which might be given us, especially when brought into connection with persons living in the world. When we are on mission, let us never say anything which might lead to the commendation of ourselves or our community; and, above all, let us beware in judging others of making comparisons to our own advantage: it would be an abomination before God. I will not enlarge further on this point. I will only say, Let us read, read often,

and meditate more often still on the chapter of the rule concerning humility, in which St. Benedict or, rather, the Spirit of God has included all that can be said that is most admirable about that virtue; and let us strive to ascend the steps traced out by this great master, if we desire to arrive at the summit of perfection."

With special force did he enjoin mutual charity and fraternal love, union between the members who compose it being the vital principle of every religious community, not that union which has its source in flesh and blood, in the conformity of tastes, humours, and dispositions, but in Jesus Christ, who is the bond of peace. He would have desired to be continually reminding them of that precept which was ever on the lips of the beloved disciple: "Little children, love one another". Such importance, indeed, did P. Muard attach to this point of the constitutions that he would sometimes say, as one of his brethren has reported of him, "It would be in vain that a candidate should possess the rarest talents, excel in preaching, work wonders; if I saw in him the absence of charity, I would certainly not receive him; this one defect would make me pitilessly exclude him. No consideration would weigh with me, for if there is a virtue which I exact from my children it is charity."

The Archbishop of Sens, being unable himself to preside at the taking of the vows, had, after signing all the necessary papers, deputed full powers to the Archpriest of Avallon to act in his name. The novices were examined by that ecclesiastic, on the very eve of the ceremony, in one of the small huts which the workmen had constructed when they were employed in raising the walls of the monastery. He interrogated

them severally apart as to the motives of the step they were about to take, and as to whether they were acting from their free choice without any constraining influence. From all he had the same satisfactory reply. That evening a functionary of a different order, the barber of St. Léger, arrived to perform his part, namely, to tonsure the heads of the monks about to be professed. P. Benoit reproached himself afterwards with having neglected to secure P. Muard's hair, which was beautiful and abundant. He had cut a piece of paper ready, as a guide to the barber when placed on the head, of the size of the crown which was to be shaved. It was large, and P. Benoit and his companions felt sure that their closely shaven heads would attract considerable notice the next day, for the sight was rare in France.

All preparations being now made, they rose at the usual hour of three on the following morning, the 3rd of October, 1850, said office, and made their meditation; nothing was omitted, save that the Fathers did not say Mass, as they desired to receive communion along with their brethren at the High Mass. Towards 8 o'clock, the five assembled previous to their departure for St. Léger-Vauban, in their future chapel, which was to be blessed that evening. The pious founder then knelt down at the foot of the altar, and humbly begged pardon of them for all the scandal he might have given them ever since they had been with him. "I know," he said, "that I am not fitted to be superior, but I am obliged to remain in charge for some time longer. I do not at this moment see anyone else to replace me, but as soon as I can make this change I shall do so, and thank God for it with all my heart." The very tone of his voice bespoke the humility and simplicity

with which he uttered these words. They then left the chapel, and took their way in profound silence, observing the same order in which they had always walked when they used to return to St. Léger from their daily work, Brother Jean and another Brother, the future Brother Jacques, who had come to try his vocation, being left in charge of the monastery during their absence. It would have been impossible for the ceremony to take place at Sainte Marie de la Pierre-qui-Vire, however much P. Muard would have desired it, the chapel being far too small to contain the numbers who were expected; for, besides the crowds who flocked from the neighbourhood, there were more than seventy priests frem the dioceses of Sens, Nevers, and Dijon who came to attend the function, so great was the interest which was generally felt in the new community.

P. Muard and his brethren proceeded to the presbytery, and here a procession of the clergy and faithful came to seek and conduct them to the church, where Mass was to be celebrated at 10 o'clock. The bells had been already ringing out joyously for the past two hours, and drums beating in the country round to announce the feast. The national guard had taken their places in the church, all the members of the municipality and notabilities of the vicinity had their reserved seats, and so filled was the sacred edifice from an early hour that the very windows had their occupants. The monastic habits had been already laid out upon a table in order to be blessed before they were assumed. It was a solemn sacrifice which was about to be made, and to none was it perhaps an act more touching than to the two priests from the Pontigny house who were present. It was to them also the closing act of a sacri-

fice to which they had been themselves obliged to submit when they consented to part with their own beloved father. One was the superior of Pontigny, P. Boyer; he was to preach on the occasion. The other was P. Massé, with whom the reader is well acquainted; and to him we are indebted for the details of this great day of profession. The Abbé Darcy, Archpriest of Avallon, had, as we have said, been delegated by the Archbishop of Sens to fill his place; nevertheless he did not fail to express by letter to P. Muard the warm interest he took in the work, as, indeed, he had already done upon every occasion where his concurrence and authority had been needed. After the Gospel the Superior of Pontigny ascended the pulpit and addressed to the congregation a discourse well suited to the occasion, exhibiting as it did a full appreciation of the work that day inaugurated. P. Muard had privately suggested to him some of the topics upon which it would be well for him to enlarge, and the prejudices which it would be advisable for him to anticipate and disarm, recommending him in particular to dwell strongly on this point—that God at various epochs of the world raises up works corresponding to the needs of society at the time.

P. Boyer acquitted himself well of his task. He described powerfully the action of God in all ages upon the Christian world through the religious Orders, and pointed out how necessary it was that, while the great Orders were on the breach, fighting in the cities by word and by pen, cohorts of a more modest character, more lightly yet not less strongly armed, should pursue evil even into the country districts to which its contagion had penetrated. Then, after refuting the objections which might be raised as to the re-appearance among them of the monastic habit, so strange in their eyes at the present

day and against which such strong prejudices existed, and giving good reasons, founded on human nature, why, so far from exciting contempt and aversion, it was likely to ensure a more attentive hearing and produce a salutary impression, he went on to meet the difficulty which some might apprehend from the sight of the poor and mortified lives of these missionary priests. Might not the example of self-immolation which they would exhibit be deemed an excess and an exaggeration? Humanly speaking, he confessed, it seemed an arduous undertaking to combine such severe bodily austerity with the labours of the ministry. But are the works of God to be measured by the miserable rules of mere human prudence? Besides, he continued, with what had we to find fault? Was it with the zeal and piety of these Apostolic men, or was it not rather with the hideousness of the evil which was rife in their midst and the enormity of the disorders to which society was a prey?

Yes, this poverty, this mortification, this death to self were, indeed, exaggerated, but that was because men's pride, selfishness, and sensuality had grown to such magnitude and knew no bounds. A violent malady calls for strong remedies, which must not be made matter of reproach to the physician. "The cause," he added, "of what our tepidity is pleased to regard as excessive—I tell you this because I know it for a certainty—was the sight of our excessive evils; here is the source whence sprang the idea of this admirable self-sacrifice. The grotto of Subiaco would not have been visited, Aiguebelle would not have known these new brothers, and the rocks of the Pierre-qui-Vire would not have seen this house of prayer and penance arise amongst them, an arsenal where weapons

will be prepared to do battle for the Lord, if the spectacle of all our miseries had not impressed the hearts and stimulated the charity of these generous souls." Finally, he insisted on the error of supposing that a life of austerity, seclusion, and penance was a sad and mournful life. He bade them go to the desert and interrogate the saintly anchorites, the Pauls and the Anthonys, or, rather, without intruding on the silence of their solitude, let them look at their faces, the peace and serenity of which would give sufficient reply. Still, such a life, it is said, wasted and consumed the strength and led to an early tomb. Life, it is true, is ever being consumed, but undoubtedly the man of pleasure uses it up faster by far than does the man of penance. Yet, after all, what does it matter to die young for one who has laid up his hopes in heaven? He concluded with an eloquent and touching address of congratulation to those whom the Lord had inspired with the high vocation of undertaking a work of so much self-devotion.

An electric movement of sympathy seemed, as it were, to run through the whole assembly when the preacher turned to those who had heretofore been his brethren, and to him in particular who had been his father and friend in the work of Pontigny, with some words of farewell which, while expressing all the fervent desires and good wishes of his heart, proved at the same time that it needed an act of sublime resignation on the part of himself and the other Pontigny Fathers to subdue the sadness with which this separation, albeit willed by God, must needs fill their souls. The discourse concluded, the *Veni Creator* was sung, and then a priest advanced, young still in years but on whom the labours of the Apostolate had begun to imprint pre-

monitory marks of age. All eyes were riveted upon him, the founder of this new congregation of devoted men, as he came forward and prostrated himself to implore the grace of being admitted to pronounce his vows. This he did, after rising to his feet, with a strong and firm voice, and then, with eyes suffused with tears, he walked to the Gospel side of the altar to sign the written formula, which he deposited, after kissing it, at the Epistle side. Being now invested with the religious habit, he again prostrated himself, with his face to the ground, while the *Miserere* of the dead was intoned over him. When he rose again, as from the tomb to a new life, and all present gazed on those features radiant with sanctity, on that shaven crown, and the newly blessed penitential habit with which he had been invested, audible sobs burst forth from the congregation on every side. Jean-Baptiste Muard had now become Brother Marie-Jean-Baptiste of the Heart of Jesus.* Moreover, the Archpriest of Avallon, who, acting as delegate for the Archbishop of Sens, had received his profession, immediately by the same authority instituted him superior of the new congregation until the election should be later made according to rule. Invested with this power, he now ascended to the highest step of the altar; and, before receiving the vows of his companions, he asked them in a few simple words whether they were willing to renounce all things, bury themselves in an eternal silence and death, brave

* A strong proof of the halo of sanctity which surrounded P. Muard, and invested his very name, was the remarkable fact that, while all the other religious, as is usual, ceased after profession to be called by their secular names, he always continued in the mouths of all to be Père Muard, both during life and after his death.

the scorn of men, pass for fools in the world's eyes, and embrace all the ignominies of the cross. Their beaming countenances had given an answer before their lips enthusiastically confirmed it. Kneeling before their father, with their hands within his, while his forehead was bent forward to touch theirs, they seemed, says the narrator, to pour forth their whole soul into his soul as they promised him obedience unto death. When they had pronounced their vows their superior invested each of them with the religious habit. P. Benoit received his first together with his name in religion, which he had already adopted at La Trappe in memory of their abode at the Benedictine hermitage. The other priest, the Abbé Moreau, took that of Bernard, in accordance with P. Muard's desire, who wished them to bear the names of these two saints. The two Brothers also were clothed with the habit and received their religious appellations ; after which all together prostrated themselves with their faces on the ground.

It was a scene never to be forgotten by those who witnessed it. The joys of Heaven and the sorrows of earth were here marvellously blended, for there were mothers and sisters present to whom it was a true Calvary, whose hearts were wrung with anguish at what they felt to be a last farewell to those so dear to them, and from whom an ill-suppressed sob would now and again move the hearers to compassion. To those who had no personal separation to mourn it was an inexpressibly touching spectacle to behold those grand monastic figures, with their pale energetic faces, at once austere and joyous,—those united Benedictine brothers, after taking their irrevocable vows, which for ever bound them to each other in God by the most sacred tie,—exchanging the kiss of peace and then together

approaching to partake of the Eucharistic banquet. During the four hours that the ceremony lasted the compact crowd which filled the church looked and listened in reverential silence, save that now and again was felt, rather than heard, a wave of deep emotion passing over them, as the wind moves the leaves of the forest or bends in concert the heads of the waving corn. When the ceremony was concluded P. Muard intoned the *Te Deum*, which was taken up magnificently by the choir. Before the congregation left the church the *procés verbal* of what had taken place, signed by the magistrates and notabilities of the district, was read from the pulpit by one of the priests of the neighbourhood, after which a procession of the clergy and faithful was formed to escort the new monks back to the presbytery, amid the ringing of bells and the beating of the drums of the national guard. Here a frugal repast had been prepared, which all who pleased might share. The Benedictine Fathers were, however, served separately, their fare being such as was customary with them and prescribed by their rule.

After an hour's rest they made ready to return as they had come, yet not as they had come, for a most imposing *cortége* now accompanied them. Fresh crowds had been pouring in from the surrounding country, and now from all the village streets and lanes might be seen multitudes debouching in continuous streams, descending the hill and then disappearing under the cover of the woods. It was a striking spectacle, and was enhanced by the swell of thousands of voices joining in sacred psalmody, which the rocks and forest depths re-echoed. After more than an hour's march the monastery came in sight standing on a rock which bathed its feet in the little river Trinclin. At this moment the

In exitu Israel, which was being chanted by the procession, was exchanged for the *Lætatus sum*, the words of which must have so well expressed the joy which filled the hearts of the men who were coming to take possession of their desert home: "I rejoiced at the things that were said to me: We shall go into the house of the Lord". P. Massé declared that it would have been vain to attempt to give an idea of the magic charm of the picture. The wild romantic site, the undulating crowd unrolling itself along the paths traced through a wilderness of furze and brushwood, the banners and arms glancing and flashing among the rocks and trees, the rush of the torrent below mingling with the solemn chants and the roll of the drums, the background of dense foliage dyed with golden and ruby hues, which shed their lustre in the autumnal sun now sinking in the west—everything that met the eye and ear combined to stir the spectators with an indefinable emotion, and to form a fitting scene for the consummation of the great act which they had come to witness.

All felt reluctant to depart and return to the common-place routine of the everyday world; and the crowd lingered until the chapel had been solemnly blessed, a function at which from seventy to eighty priests assisted. As the light was now beginning to fade, they were fain to retrace their steps and disperse to their different homes, there to describe enthusiastically to relatives and friends the spectacle which had so deeply impressed them. It was, in fact, the great event and talk of the day, and furnished a lively topic of interest for the public press. Here are P. Muard's own reflections on the subject, extracted from his correspondence: "You see that journals, painting, lithography, all are busy concerning us. I do not rejoice at

this; on the contrary, I fear. Some good humiliations on the part of men, some persecutions even, would be better for us; but patience—crosses will come; after the roses, thorns; that is as it should be. In all may the holy will of God be done; that is my most ardent prayer." His desire and anticipations were soon to be fulfilled, and this day of triumph was to be the precursor of not a few trials and mortifications.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Early Days at the Pierre-qui-Vire. First Missions.

P. Muard had now reached the goal of his desires; it was the centre to which his soul had been ever gravitating, and, having reached that centre, he was at rest. We find him writing to a devoted friend shortly after the ceremony just described, "Shall I say a word to you of the happiness we experience since the day of our profession? It is now that we realize the truth of that word, that whosoever shall give up all for God shall receive even here below a hundred-fold of peace and happiness, in a way which those who have not enjoyed our experience could not understand. Oh, how good a thing it is to give oneself to the Lord without reserve! No doubt the religious life has its trials and crosses, but how sweet they are compared to those in the world! Happy, then, are they to whom the Lord has given this sublime vocation; happier, still, they who fulfil its obligations perfectly." The two months which followed the profession were passed in profound quiet and recollection. The din of the world had ceased around

them; its echoes had expired with the evening of the 3rd of October; and now our fervent cenobites, each occupying the cell assigned to him, daily met together in the chapel for the divine office, and daily went forth to toil at clearing the ground and tracing paths and alleys, or to employ themselves in other necessary labours.

The community were seven in number: three priests, two lay-brothers, and two novices. Two priests, the Abbé Pillet, Curé of Diez, and the Abbé Faivre, Curé of Glands, had expressed to the founder a wish to become one of their number. The former, indeed, had always assured P. Muard that he might reckon upon him; the other, who had been ordained in company with P. Benoit, had also told him that he intended to join him as soon as he was installed in his monastery. Accordingly they both came to make the experiment. It was not to succeed. After two or three days' retreat the Abbé Faivre said to P. Benoit, "I cannot conceive what can have made P. Muard choose such a place as this. We are only in the beginning of October, and it is already as cold as winter. For this and other reasons I no longer feel a vocation to become a religious here." Probably the *régime* was altogether too severe for him, and so he departed, as did also the Abbé Pillet, though P. Benoit was not cognisant of his motives for withdrawing. Neither of these two Curés ever became a religious, but lived and died in their respective parishes.

P. Muard and his community entered immediately on the strict observance of their rule. The time for manual labour was at present reduced to three hours; there was afterwards a further limitation to two hours, the time subtracted being added on to that allotted to study. This, of course, did not apply to the lay-

brothers. As winter was drawing near, and the climate of that region, as may be inferred from the Abbé Faivre's experience, was none of the most genial, our solitaries were disturbed by few visitors. There was one, however, whose arrival was the cause of great joy to the founder, for he came to be reconciled to God. This was a M. Desfourneaux, son of a distinguished general under the Empire. He was a man of much cultivation, and had long placed the highest confidence in P. Muard, whom he used frequently to visit at Avallon before his journey to Italy. An unforeseen circumstance arose to delay his conversion by preventhim from keeping his engagement, the day for which had already been fixed; and this was further prolonged by the Father's absence. M. Desfourneaux's good resolution, however, had never been abandoned, and soon after the profession he came to the Pierre-qui-Vire, where he spent a few days, made his confession, and received communion. He was accommodated as best might be, with a mattrass on the floor of one of the spare cells, and was supplied with food a little better than that of the community, which is not saying much; but he was well content with his bed and board, and departed a happy man, to live for the future the life of a good Christian. After P. Muard's lamented death he took his successor, P. Bernard, for his director.

Towards the close of November, P. Muard was requested by the Dean of Saulieu, in the diocese of Dijon, who was erecting the Stations of the Cross in his church, to preach on the occasion. He gave a willing consent, and, though no one could be better fitted to preach on this subject without previous study, nevertheless he prepared himself as best he could.

When thus occupied, he always borrowed the time from his night's rest. He set out on foot for Saulieu the previous day, for the distance from the Pierre-qui-Vire is considerable. He had never preached in that town, the same, as the reader will perhaps remember, where the mistress of the hotel used insulting language to him when on his road to Italy. It was also his first essay at preaching since his profession. He appeared in the pulpit in his monastic habit, which combined with his own striking personal appearance to produce at once a favourable impression, which was fully confirmed by all that fell from his lips and by that air of sanctity which seemed, as it were, to surround him as an atmosphere and to draw hearts to him even before he had spoken a word.

During his absence of three or four days a young postulant of eighteen arrived; he was sub-gardener in a neighbouring hamlet, and had already spoken to the Father of his desire to try his vocation. He was not the only youth of that class in life who presented himself for trial during the late autumn and early winter of this year. One in particular, whom his mother brought, was a mere boy of thirteen or fourteen years of age, but who, being of an ardent temperament, and having occasionally seen P. Muard and P. Bernard and heard them preach in the neighbourhood, had been seized with an irrepressible desire to become a monk at the Pierre-qui-Vire. He was accordingly permitted to remain awhile with them in order to make experiment of their mode of life. He seemed strong, healthy, and intelligent, so that P. Muard could not but feel a growing interest in the boy; he himself, indeed, taught him the rudiments of Latin, and had good hopes of his satisfactory pro-

gress. When absent on missions he used to entrust him to the care of one of the Fathers. This youth was to be a source of much pain and perplexity to him; but to this we will not further allude at present, in order to avoid interrupting the course of the narrative.

The first mission which was given by the founder of the Pierre-qui-Vire was at Rouvray. He undertook it with some reluctance, as he felt that his presence was really needed in the monastic house during these early days, in order to train his community thoroughly in the religious life. He yielded, however, to the pressing solicitations of the Curé of Rouvray, but accepted only on condition that he should be allowed to associate one of the Fathers of Pontigny in the undertaking. The Curé made no difficulty, but P. Boyer, the Superior of Pontigny, would not consent, and this from motives which were far from unreasonable and, indeed, approved themselves to P. Muard himself. P. Boyer considered that many inconveniences might flow from an association where complete unity was absent. Differences existed between them; difference in vestment, difference in diet. This would at once strike the parishioners and provoke comparisons which must be injurious to the effect of the mission. So P. Muard was obliged to take P. Bernard with him and leave P. Benoit alone in charge at home, promising to return occasionally for a day, for the mission was to last all Advent. It was fruitful in good results. The success, as P. Muard acknowledged, had surpassed all his hopes. Almost the entire parish approached the sacraments, including nearly all the women, the great majority of the men, and, with one solitary exception, all the young people. The

labour of the confessional alone was overwhelming, for many flocked in from the neighbourhood to profit by the opportunity. "We were in the holy tribunal every day," says the Father, "from five o'clock in the morning to ten o'clock in the evening, only leaving it to ascend the altar, to preach, or to take some rest. We had to say our office before going to the church in the morning, and in the evening after leaving it, for it was impossible to find a moment during the day for the fulfilment of this duty."

On the Sunday mornings he was in request to go and preach in the adjoining parishes, a favour which he could not refuse the Curés, desiring also as he did to make his congregation known. P. Bernard had then to fill his place at Rouvray. Both of them adhered strictly to their rule of life during the mission; and, notwithstanding its fatigues, they were so far from suffering in health that P. Muard declared at the close of it that they had actually gained flesh, while P. Bernard felt better than he did at its beginning. This was a most satisfactory result to the founder, as proving that their mode of living was compatible with missionary work. He had the still further consolation of observing its beneficial impression on men's minds. This mission, indeed, produced a wonderful effect at Rouvray, and was spoken of as an era of regeneration even thirty-five years afterwards. From Rouvray P. Muard did not return directly home, but paid a short visit to Avallon, which contained many friends to whom he felt he owed a debt of gratitude for recent assistance, and to whom he desired to pay his personal thanks. There were, besides, in that city, as we have seen, some chosen souls who looked to him for direction, and to whom he regarded it a duty to devote

a few hours. He could not, however, prolong his stay, for his presence was imperatively needed at the monastery, especially since the late accession of postulants. The long absence of a superior is always a loss, but in the case of one who, like him, was the very head, soul, and heart of his community, which was still in its infancy, it was much to be deprecated. He was, however, as has been observed, frequently passing backwards and forwards during those absences which the double object of his vocation rendered a necessity.

Towards the end of January a most unexpected visitor presented himself at the Pierre-qui-Vire, no less a personage than the Comte de Montalembert. What others might have esteemed a high honour came as a trial to one who sought only silence and solitude. He was incapable of feeling what is commonly called flattered by the attentions of any one, eminent either from station or intellectual gifts, and as regarded the interests of his community he had committed them all to God and was not ambitious of human patronage. A few words, however, had scarcely been exchanged before these two noble souls fully understood each other, and all reserve had vanished. Montalembert, who had been led thither by no vulgar curiosity, but by the reported sanctity of P. Muard and the sublimity of the work he had undertaken, was to be a frequent visitor at the monastery, sometimes in conjunction with Mgr. Dupanloup or other ecclesiastical personages, and more often accompanied by members of his own family, for his château of La Roche-en-Brenil was distant but a few hours' journey from the Pierre-qui-Vire. Knowing the extreme poverty of the community, he offered, with that perfect courtesy which distinguished him, to interest himself in securing for P. Muard

speedy and all-sufficient assistance from the head of the State, which at that time Montalembert possessed influence to obtain without fail; but no offer could have tempted this worthy son of St. Benedict and devout imitator of the Saint of Assisi, from his allegiance to his queen, holy poverty. "Monsieur le Comte," he replied, "be pleased to accord to us your moral protection; that will satisfy our desires, and we shall be very thankful, but permit us to remain the children of Providence. By accepting your offer I should fear to grieve our Lord, who wills us to be poor; it is for Him to provide for His children's needs."

How many reflections does not this touching and noble answer suggest! Without censuring any one who is diligent in soliciting human aid, or who eagerly lays plans to secure pecuniary assistance in good and holy undertakings, may we not also believe that in proportion as we rely on these earthly sources we to some extent diminish our claim to draw on those fathomless wells of the divine bounty which have never failed the Saints? The future writer of the *Moines d'Occident* may have had in his memory what he beheld at the Pierre-qui-Vire, as well as at the Grande Chartreuse, when his gifted pen traced the portrait of the true monks and recorded his confidence that the genuine monastic spirit lived again in their representatives in this our 19th century. A few days after the Count's first visit a cart drew up at the monastery door laden with vegetables which he had sent as an alms. It was gratefully received by the community, but words would fail to describe the delight of the lay-brother who held the office of cook. It may not be out of place to allude here to some

observations made by P. Benoit at a later date. It would come in his way to hear things said which no one would have hazarded in the Superior's presence, and which serve to prove how hard it is even for good men to place full confidence in God's providential care of His servants, when adequate human means appear deficient, or to view a work as favoured by Him if it does not square with their habitual notions.

Mgr. de Sens's Vicar-General, the Abbé Chaveau, gave his opinion one evening at the presbytery of Quarré-les-Tombes, to some Curés of the neighbourhood, concerning the new work, in presence of P. Benoit. "I am very sorry," he said, "to see P. Muard at the Pierre-qui-Vire. I should have much preferred his remaining at Pontigny. At the head of twelve good missionaries he could have done more good. What will he do at the Pierre-qui-Vire? That new foundation has not my approbation and never will have." So spake human prudence by the mouth of this good man. P. Benoit discreetly held his peace, but he reported the words to the founder, who simply replied, "Let us do, and allow them to talk, so long as our Lord is satisfied and we are ourselves happy in our holy vocation". Mgr. de Sens, as we have seen, was a more than cordial friend to the undertaking; yet even he, no less than the Vicar-General, was puzzled as to how the community contrived to live, and even to build what they required. The Abbé Chaveau, when at the Château of Chastellux one day, sounded the Marquis on this subject, supposing that, if any one had information with respect to it, it would be he. "I ask myself often," he said, "how they can possibly find wherewithal to supply their needs." "Providence," replied this pious layman, "watches over them,

and gives them, not superfluities, but what is necessary to them." The Archbishop, after paying his visit to the Pierre-qui-Vire, to which we shall soon refer, spent two or three days in a neighbouring presbytery, where, the conversation turning on the subject of the new community, Monseigneur made the following remark: "For five or six years people will give to them; after that public charity will be wearied, and they will be neglected". P. Benoit, quoting this observation, says, "The five or six years are long passed, but public charity is far from having abandoned P. Muard's little community". He was writing after the lamented founder's death. It must be borne in mind that these Fathers never begged, neither did they adopt any of the common devices so generally employed in our day for raising money. They prayed, they edified, they waited on God, looking to the Hand which fills all things living with plenteousness, and It fed them.

The Archpriest of Avallon had insisted on P. Muard's preaching the Lent station at his church of St. Lazare. He was one whom, from motives of gratitude, always so powerful with the Father, he could not possibly refuse, but in accepting he was doing violence to his own inclinations, for he did not think he was fitted for giving missions in large places, his attraction leading him to the smaller towns and rural districts. He had no suitable instructions prepared, but he at once set to work and composed a few, which he then read to his *confrères*, begging them in the humblest manner to give their opinion freely. He would gladly have re-written all the manuscripts he possessed, but time was wanting. "God knows," he said, "that I am making a great sacrifice. They ought all to be put in the fire, that I may begin afresh."

Nevertheless, the Lent mission at Avallon yielded abundant fruit. P. Muard was well known there, and the people flocked to hear him, not to admire a brilliant orator, but to listen to the words of true wisdom flowing from his lips, and even for the mere pleasure of looking on one who was regarded as a Saint. If there was not the same external display of enthusiasm as at Rouvray, and the number of conversions was not so striking, this must be attributed to the difference between the two places; for in a city accustomed to a yearly course of Lent sermons, in addition to the habitual advantages regarding preaching which populous centres enjoy, there was not the same opportunity for a miraculous draught of fishes as in poor and, in a spiritual point of view, scantily provided country places.

The Saturdays were given up to confessions, and it was easy to guess which was P. Muard's confessional from the crowds which always surrounded it. The work, indeed, which he there accomplished could scarcely be overrated, not merely in reconciling sinners to God, but in leading on pious souls to greater perfection, forming them to a life of self-renouncement, meekness, and humility, after the model which he ever had before his own eyes—the Divine Heart of Jesus. What he had begun in the pulpit he completed in the tribunal of penance. After long hours spent therein, when he returned to the presbytery, not a word, not a look, would betray the fatigue which he must have experienced; still less would a complaint or an expression of impatience escape his lips. He was, in fact, the personification of the meekness and gentleness which he preached to others, and which his own example so powerfully encouraged. He was able during the

mission to pay a flying visit on two occasions to his children at the Pierre-qui-Vire, but he could not spend more than two or three hours with them. One day he made his whole return journey on foot, during which he meditated on the instruction which he was to give in the evening. He often said to P. Benoit, "When I have been very much occupied for God, and am quite tired, I ascend the pulpit willingly, because I can reckon on the aid of the Holy Spirit". After he had closed his mission at Avallon, he returned to his monastery, where, however, he was only able to remain for the interval between Easter and May, during which month he had engaged to preach at Noyers-sur-Serein, and thither he repaired at the end of April.

The Archbishop of Sens had promised to visit the Pierre-qui-Vire either before or after a confirmation which he was to hold at Quarré-les-Tombes. P. Muard, therefore, charged P. Bernard in his absence to prepare everything for the Prelate's reception, even to improving the road which led up to the gate of the monastery, a precaution, we may believe, by no means superfluous when guests were expected who did not travel on foot. We can well imagine what sort of roads or, rather, tracks existed in a wild rocky region like the Morvand; indeed, we are expressly told that the Marquis of Chastellux brought the Archbishop in his own carriage, his horses being accustomed to these rough ways. The 20th of May was fixed for this pastoral visit. P. Muard had left the mission he was giving, and had returned on the previous evening, that he might be ready to receive the Archbishop at the head of the community. Since the 3rd of October these solitudes had not beheld such a concourse of pilgrims as on that morning came streaming towards the Pierre-

qui-Vire, along the converging paths, with the joint object of doing honour to the head of the diocese, and of testifying the ever-increasing interest and sympathy which was felt for P. Muard's undertaking. The necessary expenses of the day were chiefly defrayed by a truly Christian family of the neighbourhood, named Chabannes, who were always forward in sending provisions to the monastery whenever there was an accidental influx of visitors, or on any great festal occasion.

The Archbishop was warm in his commendation, and even admiration, of all that had been effected in that rugged wilderness during so brief a space of time, and with such scanty means; in short, he openly declared that the transformation brought about by the labour of these few monks was one of the miracles of Divine Providence, and he cordially bestowed his blessing on the little band who, with such exemplary self-devotion, had consecrated their lives to prayer, penance, and the ministry of the word. We need not say with what gratitude his benediction was received by the holy superior and his community, or with what veneration they surrounded their chief pastor during the few hours of his stay, for at three o'clock he returned to Quarré-les-Tombes for the confirmation which he was to hold the next day; and the inmates of the monastery returned to their accustomed round of prayer and labour. P. Muard left them on the morrow to complete his mission at Noyers. It will here be observed that, if the Archbishop after his visit let fall those unfavourable prognostics as to the future prospects of the Pierre-qui-Vire to which allusion has been made, it was, at any rate, through no want of sympathy with the object of the institute. It had always met with his cordial support, and never on any single occasion

had P. Muard experienced the slightest difficulty or hindrance at his hands in carrying it out.

To speak of the success of the mission at Noyers-sur-Serein would be but to repeat what has been so often said, and this, indeed, applies more or less to every mission given by the holy founder of the Pierre-qui-Vire. We shall, therefore, content ourselves with noticing only the special features which may have distinguished them, or the more striking incidents connected with each.

CHAPTER XXVII.

MISSIONS IN 1851.

JUNE is not a favourable month for missions in the country districts, as the labourers are so much employed in the fields, but it is a great season of preparation for first communions, a work which had a singular attraction for P. Muard. To prepare the pure souls of children for that first mysterious meeting with their Eucharistic God, an act often so decisive of the future Christian life of these lambs of the fold, was a task which our indefatigable missionary always willingly undertook. Accordingly, we find him accepting the invitation of two Curés in the diocese of Dijon to assist them by giving a children's retreat. But he was unable to satisfy all the demands made upon him, as he felt that his presence was needed in his monastery, and on some occasions, therefore, he sent one of the other Fathers in his place. We need hardly say that the month of June, dedicated as it is to the Sacred Heart, was specially honoured at the Pierre-qui-Vire, and endeared beyond measure to him who had been

through life Its fervent adorer. There was another reason besides for P. Muard's devotion to the month of June, namely, the occurrence of St. John the Baptist's day. This was both the anniversary of his own baptism and the feast of his great patron, whom he desired also to take as his model in the work to which he had been called, which combined the practice of the severest austerity with the preaching of penance. He desired to carry with him, as it were, the atmosphere of the desert and the garb of the anchorite into the haunts of men, like the great Precursor, when he emerged to raise his voice and proclaim the nearness of the Kingdom of God. The providential assistance which, without solicitation, he had obtained enabled him during the summer to proceed with some very needful additions, both within and outside the monastery. A parlour where guests could be received, together with accommodation to lodge them, all perfectly distinct and separated from the community, was imperatively required; for how could quiet be preserved and the law of silence, so essential at the Pierre-qui-Vire, be maintained while strangers were passing in and out, who were not bound by the same obligation?

No sooner, therefore, had he returned from Noyers than he set his hand to these constructions, encouraging the builders both by word and example. They worked for him as they had probably never worked for any other employer. P. Muard was in the habit of saying, and beyond all question firmly believed, that he was not fitted to command; yet no one was better obeyed than he was, whether by his spiritual subjects or by those who laboured under his direction in manual work. This holy man, undoubtedly, preferred obeying

to commanding, but it is by no means true that they who love to command are always the best fitted for the office; certainly not if their desire to exercise authority springs from a motive of ambition and a craving for superiority. It has been often remarked that to know how to command well it is necessary to have first learned how to obey. This lesson P. Muard had been studying during his whole life, and at that school he would have wished to remain all his days. To this qualification he added an exquisite tact and graciousness of manner. What some persons learn in a measure from their great personal desire to please, he who knew not what it was to entertain such a wish and who would have resisted it as a sin if it had suggested itself, seemed to possess as an intuitive gift, which had its root, however, in a heart of the tenderest charity. This was perceptible to the roughest as to the most refined of men. The working-man saw and felt that he loved him, and that he was incapable of wishing to domineer over any one, or to say a word which could be the occasion of pain. Hence, when he gave his orders, it seemed a pleasure to obey; and, indeed, all who had been employed at the monastery were unanimous in giving this testimony concerning him. As for the love which his children bore him and the veneration with which they regarded him, it would be difficult to find an adequate comparison, inasmuch as the spiritual affections immeasurably surpass the natural; and thus the love and respect of sons for their earthly parent are an insufficient figure of those close ties which unite the members of a religious family to such a father and superior as these had the happiness to possess. His influence was unbounded, and one word, nay, a mere look from him, was law.

The mission of Dun-les-Places called him away about the second week of August. This was a very unfavourable season, for harvest in the Morvand—it is late in that region—was just beginning, but the Curé had a strong reason for desiring it, to which P. Muard yielded. The newly built church was to be consecrated in the beginning of September, and, this being also the Jubilee year, he thought it very desirable that the ceremony should be preceded by a mission for the benefit of his parish. The ancient church had been falling into ruins when, in the year 1843, the Chevalier Feuillet, an old navy officer, now mayor of the commune, who was ambitious to perpetuate his memory by some striking act of liberality, decided on rebuilding the church in an imposing style. It had taken seven years to complete, notwithstanding the zeal and energy with which the old officer, who commenced his work at seventy-one years of age, urged it forward. The site had been well chosen on a plateau occupying the centre of the commune, which satisfied all except the inhabitants of the hamlets which were contiguous to the former church; but it was impossible for it to be near to every one in a parish of that size. P. Muard was to prove on this occasion, as he had on so many others, the successful allayer of discontent. He was obliged to take P. Bernard with him, for confessions were expected to be numerous in a population numbering from 1,700 to 1,800 souls, and where so many of the outlying hamlets which they had to visit lay at a considerable distance from the new church.

Every obstacle seemed at the outset to combine in thwarting the success of this mission, for the church, though nearly finished, still wanted many of its windows, and was consequently full of currents of air and

extremely uncomfortable in bad weather. But neither the fatigues of the day's labour in the harvest-field nor any other impediment abated the zeal of these good peasants. Large as was the church, it used to be completely filled. "We are very much tired," they would say, "with our day's work, but we would sit up the whole night to hear P. Muard." The veneration which he inspired was truly wonderful; the people had soon discerned the impress of sanctity, not in his words alone, but in his whole person; and we may add that the people are good judges on this point, being seldom mistaken. He caught a very bad cold on his chest from the draughty church, which affected his voice, but he nevertheless preached every evening either there or at one of the distant hamlets, alternating with P. Bernard, so that all the infirm, the old and children included, were enabled to profit by the Jubilee. The unwearying self-sacrifice of the missionaries moved to a corresponding zeal this simple population. The poor reapers hastened to leave their work of an evening to go and hear them, and when P. Muard and the Curé congratulated them on their eagerness, they would say, "God will give us the time to finish our harvest. We may well spare Him a few hours every week, for we shall still be behindhand with Him."

The fruits of this mission were, indeed, most consolatory to the two Fathers. No less than 1,100 persons made their communion, and among them one whose return to God was a singular joy to the heart of P. Muard. The Chevalier Feuillet, notwithstanding his act of princely liberality, had, owing to the unhappy times in which he had lived, been estranged for long years from the practice of his religion. He had not confessed for at least sixty years, never probably since

his first communion, so that it was the more astonishing to see him expend from 500,000 to 600,000 francs on this pious work. God, who never permits Himself to be outdone in generosity, rewarded this sacrifice with the grace of conversion. The Chevalier addressed himself in the first instance to the Curé, but he recommended the old veteran to go to P. Muard, who gladly received him and prepared him for making his communion on the great closing day of the mission. From that moment he never swerved from the faithful fulfilment of his duties as a Catholic, and he also retained for the remainder of his life a warm affection for the holy man who had been instrumental in reconciling him to God. How firm and gentle was the influence exercised over him by P. Muard may be gathered from the following instance. The Curé of Dun-les-Places received a letter from Mgr. de Nevers in which he informed him of his resolution not to consecrate the church unless it was made over either to the commune or to the Fabrique (Building Commission). Now, the Curé was aware that Monsieur le Chevalier would have no mind to give it up. He knew his man well, and how fixed he was in his purposes. If he had persevered in this costly undertaking—and who is there who has any experience in building who does not know how much more expense has usually to be incurred than was anticipated?—the opposition and scoffs of the inhabitants of the distant hamlets had contributed not a little to stiffening him in his determination. "You will see," they said; "M. le Chevalier will never go on; by and by he will throw the whole matter up." But M. le Chevalier was one who would not be daunted. He accomplished his work in spite of everything, and, as was natural, he loved it; the church was "his dear

daughter". So the Curé, also very naturally, disliked the idea of having to acquaint him with the Bishop's decision.

"I reckon on your charity," he said to P. Muard, "to get me out of this difficulty. Will you, my Reverend Father, be so obliging as to convey this communication to the Chevalier Feuillet? There is, you see, a piece of good news for him also, for Mgr. de Nevers informs me that the Sovereign Pontiff has acceded to his desire, and made him Chevalier of St. Gregory, sending him the cross of the order." P. Muard at once accepted the awkward commission, and went to seek the Chevalier in the hamlet where he resided. He received him with open arms, and the Father, as was his wont, entered at once in a simple and straightforward manner upon the business which brought him, using, nevertheless, a certain wise discretion. He did not keep his pleasant news to the last, but gave it the precedence, with only a hint of what was to follow, for he knew he had to deal with a man who valued honour much more than possessions. "Monsieur le Chevalier," he said, "I have brought you two pieces of information. One will be very agreeable to you, the other rather less so. Pius IX. has named you Chevalier of the Order of St. Gregory; *Virtuti et merito:* such is the motto inscribed on the cross which Monseigneur de Nevers is to present to you himself on the day of the consecration of the church which you call your 'dear daughter'. This is the good piece of news. Here is the other, which, may be, will grieve M. le Chevalier. Monseigneur will not consecrate your dear daughter if you do not first give her either to the commune or to the Fabrique." "Tell Monsieur le Curé," replied the aged Chevalier, without

a moment's hesitation, "to write immediately to M. ———, my lawyer at Lormes, and bid him come to-morrow or, at latest, on the 7th of September, that he may draw up the act of donation either to the commune or to the Fabrique." The notary came, and the deed was drawn up making over the church and adjoining land to the commune, according to Mgr. Dufêtre's desire.

The close of the mission took place on the 8th of September, the feast of our Lady's Nativity, when Confirmation was administered by the Bishop to 250 persons. On the 9th he consecrated the church, which was filled to overflowing. Among those present were numbered a hundred and twenty priests and many distinguished laymen. Church and State had combined that day to honour the benefactor, for, besides the cross of the Order of St. Gregory bestowed on him publicly by the Bishop in the name of the Holy Father, he received also the cross of officer of the Legion of Honour, which the President of the Republic, Louis Napoleon, sent to him. Among the lay notabilities were the Comte de Montalembert and M. Dupin, President at that time of the Legislative Assembly. He was struck by P. Muard's air of sanctity, and desired to make his acquaintance. Such honourable notice was far from gratifying that holy man, but he could not either in courtesy or in prudence decline the introduction. "I cannot think," he said afterwards, "how I came to catch the eye of M. Dupin, for I have nothing very attractive in my appearance." A monumental cross was erected to commemorate this mission, which left an abiding memorial also in the hearts of the people. It required no less than fourteen pair of oxen and sixty men to pull the enormous block of

granite up to the eminence where it was to serve as a pedestal for a gigantic cross, which from this lofty position would be visible for miles around. P. Muard, not content with his spiritual labours, was forward in directing, encouraging, and even personally aiding the workmen in their toil. It was beautiful to see him amidst these men, who gathered round him like children round their father, talking kindly and familiarly with them, and profiting by any favouring circumstance to introduce a word, in his simple way, about God and holy things.

During this mission the masons had by his orders been busy at the Pierre-qui-Vire excavating a grotto in a rock near the Trinclin, which, however, he was never to inhabit. His original idea had been to retire thither from time to time to pray, but he was not able to realize his purpose, and at his death it remained pretty much in the state he found it on his return from Dun-les-Places. Silent retirement, to converse with our Lord, was always his longing desire; but, as he often said, "I shall never take rest except in the tomb"; and he spoke the truth. Soon after his return to the monastery he received an invitation from the Abbé Baudiau, the Curé of Dun-les-Places, to accompany him to Raffigny, the château of M. Dupin. Both he and Mme. Dupin, he said, were bent on receiving P. Muard under their roof. The Father much disliked visits of this sort, and wished to refuse. However, after speaking of the matter to his brethren in Chapter, he finally decided, from prudential reasons, to accept the invitation. M. Dupin was an influential member of the legislative body, and such men must be treated with consideration. "I must, therefore, trample on my repugnances," he said to P. Benoit, "though it will

be to me a tiresome visit, and a tiring journey, since I shall go on foot and the roads are very bad. If any one should come while I am away," he added, "mind you do not say where I am." And P. Massé did, in fact, come on the very day P. Muard left, and awaited his return; but not one word did P. Muard say of the cause of his absence or of having paid a visit to the President of the Legislative Assembly. P. Muard, when he thus complied with the dictates of prudence, by treating influential persons with due consideration, had, we need scarcely say, no eye to pecuniary assistance. If all that has been said be not sufficient to prove his more than disinterestedness, it may be well to mention that on several occasions the Comte de Montalembert, who was in high favour with the President of the Republic and afterwards with the Emperor in the early days of his power, told him that if he needed 10,000 francs he could obtain them for him without the slightest difficulty. He had only to speak the word. But that word never was spoken. P. Muard had placed his confidence in God, and would have feared to grieve Him by acting in too human a manner.

It would seem that, in the first instance, Mme. de Montalembert was hardly aware that the Founder of the Pierre-qui-Vire was one who would never solicit gifts, nay, could royally refuse them; for one day when, in company with the Curé of St. Léger-Vauban, he called to pay a visit of courtesy at the Roche-en-Brenil, the lady of the château made sure in her own mind that it would prove to be a begging visit, so she drew the Curé of St. Léger on one side to tell him that they were by no means rich, and were unable to give to every good work. There can be no doubt, indeed,

but that her husband was overwhelmed with applications. P. Muard, however, was not one to add to their number. "We have not come, Madame la Comtesse," replied the Curé, "to solicit your charity in behalf of the Pierre-qui-Vire, but to pay a visit to your illustrious persons." From that moment this good lady was quite at her ease, and always glad to see P. Muard. When the Curé mentioned to him what the Comtesse had said, he replied, "Will you take an opportunity to assure her that all I ask for is the moral protection of her husband, the Comte de Montalembert?" It was a similar object alone which prompted also his visit to the President of the Assembly. Sometimes, however, his attentions to illustrious persons were suggested by a motive of gratitude, always very strong in him. He and his community owed much to the noble and pious family of Chastellux, and he did not fail to go and see them at the beginning of the new year to offer his felicitations, a courtesy much thought of in France. At another time we find him going to condole with them on the loss of an infant child. When, on passing through Quarré-les-Tombes, he mentioned to the Dean the object of his visit, the latter exclaimed, "What! you put yourself out of the way and make that long journey only for a baby, who is now in Heaven. I really do not understand you." And, certainly, few could understand him thoroughly: this is the lot of the saints while they are on earth. P. Muard himself always seemed to have an intuition, a sort of spiritual tact, as to what he ought to do, and what to leave alone, and he might in all truth and sincerity say, as he did towards the close of his life, "I do not believe that I have ever taken a step in order to please men".

We can give only a rapid glance at the missions which occupied the remainder of this year. In October he preached a successful one at Domecy-sur-le-Vault. During his absence, Mgr. Dupanloup, the Bishop of Orleans, having heard from his friend, the Comte de Montalembert, a description of all the marvels which this new community had been effecting in the Morvand wilderness, was seized with a great desire to visit the monastery. Hither, then, he proceeded with the Count, and was received with much reverence and courtesy by the monks. Everything he saw excited his lively satisfaction, but the absence of the founder was a great disappointment to him. P. Muard had no sooner returned than he wrote to the Bishop to express his great regret at not having had the opportunity of receiving him in person, who in his reply said, "How sorry I was not to find you in your holy and matchless solitude! Come, then, to see me, if you can, after your Advent. It will to me be a great consolation, and perhaps it will please God to cause a great good to spring from it." This remark suggests the idea that Mgr. Dupanloup already had it in his mind to confide to the monks of the Pierre-qui-Vire the guardianship of the precious relics of St. Benedict, which for many centuries the diocese of Orleans had the honour of possessing, a design which he subsequently carried out. P. Muard was not able to make a long stay at the monastery, for he had promised to give an Advent mission in his old parish of St. Martin, in compliance with the earnest request of the Curé. He had, indeed, willingly consented, and for this reason: "I was Curé," he said, "of that parish for above two years. During that time I was guilty of many negligences; I am happy to have this opportunity of repairing them."

The mission had scarcely been opened when the "Coup d'État" took place. The news that the President of the Republic had dissolved the Legislative Assembly did not, however, create as much excitement in Avallon as in many other places, and the mission took its regular course, while at the Pierre-qui-Vire the tranquillity was quite undisturbed. Indeed the inhabitants of the isolated hamlets of the Morvand did not hear of this great political event, which was setting all France in a turmoil of alarm and expectation, until three days after it had taken place. P. Muard's old parishioners were charmed to have him once more among them. But the uncertainty widely experienced as to what turn events might take acted to a certain extent unfavourably, interfering as it did with that undivided and concentrated attention so essential to the full success of a mission. Nevertheless, he was able to effect a considerable amount of good, especially in the case of many pious souls. He had also the opportunity of repairing to his own satisfaction the negligences of which, in his humility, he supposed himself to have been guilty.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

FRESH NOVICES. MISSIONS. OBSESSION OF A BROTHER.

P. MUARD felt that his presence was so much needed at the monastery, especially for the training of the novices, that he himself gave but few missions in the year 1852, sending P. Bernard in his place for some which had been requested for Lent. His apostolic zeal, however, did not remain inactive, and he gave a

kind of mission to the inhabitants of the scattered hamlets of that wild district, in the room which, when completed, was to serve as an exterior chapel, but was as yet a mere skeleton. "We are evangelizing," he writes to a friend, "numbers of the faithful, who come to us from all the neighbouring hamlets, and who sometimes amount to two or three hundred. We have been obliged to arrange our new chapel for these meetings; we have improvised windows, hung the inside with sheets, and dressed an altar, on which we have placed an image of the Blessed Virgin, decorating the whole with wreaths of ivy. Our good neighbours seem well disposed, and we hope that this little mission will not be unproductive of fruit." The results were, in fact, satisfactory, as many as four hundred of the peasantry attending the sermon delivered on the Sunday afternoon. He also went for a few days to Vireaux, at the request of the Curé, who had begged his aid in preparing his parishioners for the fulfilment of their Paschal duties. Many in his native village, where he was so highly revered, including some of his remaining relatives, were glad to resort to him for their Easter confessions. A few retreats, in preparation for first communions, he gave during the early summer, and one in the autumn to some Augustinian nuns at Auxerre, but the only regular missions which we find him undertaking were those of Foissy-les-Vézelay and Cussy-les-Forges.

Several novices were added to the community this year, and, among them, the future Père Louis de Gonzague, who came with a recommendation from P. Lacordaire, and Brother Vincent de Paul, sent by a vicaire at Dijon. The latter had been copyist to a troop of comedians, and had impatiently awaited the

termination of his engagement to go and serve God in solitude. It was on occasion of seeing this good brother pass by that the holy founder, only three weeks before his death, made to the Bishop of Dijon the remark to which we have already alluded: "My elect have remained in the world, it is God's elect who are here". He received also two novices at the end of September, namely, the future Père Pierre Augustin and Brother Anselme, the latter of whom died in the odour of sanctity at the Pierre-qui-Vire after fifteen years of religious profession. He had been converted when in garrison at Perpignan, in the year 1830, and it nearly cost him his life, the anti-religious feeling in the army being very bitter at that period. Leaving his regiment, he went to the Grand Séminaire at Sens, where he filled the office of confidential man of business. He knew P. Muard well, for it will be remembered that he and the Abbé Bravard resided there for a considerable time, before the purchase of Pontigny, and it was he who attended to the two Fathers. He loved and venerated P. Muard exceedingly, and was glad therefore to make a retreat at the Pierre-qui-Vire under his direction. When the day of election arrived he pointed out to P. Benoit three or four lines in the Spiritual Exercises which had specially touched him. "I did not want to go further," he said; "the matter is settled. I remain here."

This sudden resolve was far from giving satisfaction at the seminary, and the Économe, M. de Courtade, came off to remonstrate against it. Such a hasty decision, he urged, was very embarrassing to them; particularly just as they were expecting the return of the seminarists. It was not easy at a moment's notice to replace a confidential agent; he ought to have

forewarned them of his intentions. God, however, had not made His will known to him sooner. What he may have said in his justification we are not told, but we shall have occasion to notice hereafter the strong opinion entertained by P. Muard as to the prior claims of a vocation when it calls to a higher state of perfection. The mission of Foissy-les-Vézelay was well attended, and after its conclusion P. Muard had but a short time to give to the monastery before setting out for Cussy-les-Forges, where he was occupied the whole of Advent. The proclamation of the Empire, which took place early in December, seemed to pass unnoticed in this locality, and there was the usual congregation gathered in the church on the evening of the very day when the news was published. This mission, though productive of solid good, offered no features of a striking character; chiefly, no doubt, because the parish had enjoyed the advantage of frequent retreats and courses of instruction which the active Curé had provided for his flock.

P. Benoit, who had the opportunity of hearing P. Muard preach twice during this mission, observed a certain change in him. The ardour and energy of his manner was sensibly diminished, but what he might appear to have lost in this respect he had gained in an air of calm and deep conviction, which on very many persons makes a much more durable impression than the most impassioned declamation ordinarily produces, and, above all, in that ever-increasing stamp of sanctity on his brow which has a greater power to win and convert hearts than the most eloquent discourse. The knowledge of his mortified life also added much to the weight of his words. It was known in the parish that he took his short allowance of rest, without undressing,

on a hard table. Such a man has wonderful influence with sinners and with careless Christians; and the cry of "Do penance, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," is like the blast of a trumpet in men's ears, as when it first proceeded from the lips of the Baptist. His attraction in the confessional was, indeed, very manifest wherever he went, and even brought from afar those who had previously experienced it. Almost every day a vehicle would arrive from Avallon conveying people to Cussy-les-Forges for confession. It was a proceeding which both surprised and amused P. Muard; and the last thing that would ever have occurred to him was that his sanctity was the magnet which drew them. He was absent for only a couple of days to take one of his young monks, the Père Joseph, to Sens for his ordination, during which time the Curé supplied his place in giving the instructions. He had promised a mission to the Curé of Poilly-sur-Serein, and, although he found much to occupy him at home, where, in particular, a distressing circumstance of which we are about to speak called for his special attention, he was bent on fulfilling his engagement, and left the monastery again before the middle of January, arranging for P. Joseph to follow him. His object was to initiate him in the conduct of a mission, so that he might be able to carry it on during his own temporary absence, for he purposed returning to the Pierre-qui-Vire by the 2nd of February to receive the vows of the Père Etienne, a Curé who had been passing through his noviciate.

In order that the reader may understand what were the trials which beset the founder in his arduous work of training a new community, as well as to give an example of his heavenly patience and unsparing self-

sacrifice when it was question of a soul in peril or a vocation threatened, we must relate in some detail the extraordinary behaviour of one of the young novices, a behaviour which could be referred only to diabolical influence. It will be remembered that a boy of about fourteen years of age had been allowed by P. Muard, at his own earnest request and that of his mother, to remain with them in order to have some practical experience of their life, which he had an ardent desire of embracing. The Father took a strong interest in him, as has been observed, and when he was away from home always entrusted some one with the special charge of him. This after a while began to be no light task. The first symptom of excitement which the boy displayed was while P. Muard was engaged in the mission at Dun-les-Places, when he intimated to P. Benoit in a very decided tone his intention of spending the night in a cavern under the rock, no doubt the same which P. Muard wished to convert into a grotto for retreat. P. Benoit replied that in the absence of the Superior he could not possibly grant him permission; he must wait P. Muard's return. The youth was ill satisfied, so impetuous was the desire which possessed him, but whether he ever asked P. Muard's leave and was refused, or whether the approach of winter chilled his ardour P. Benoit could not say; at any rate, he certainly never passed a night in the cavern.

His eccentricities were by and by to assume a much more distressing character. One dominant idea, akin to semi-Pelagianism, seemed to occupy the youth's mind, betraying itself in an unvarying form of expression, which he frequently repeated: "If I willed to do a thing I could do it". He began also to be much

less recollected at times in his behaviour, and moreover would try to tempt the two other young Brothers to indulge in a like spirit of dissipation. These symptoms created much uneasiness, and when P. Muard went to give the mission at Foissy, he committed the poor Brother in question to the care of an experienced Curé, the future Père Etienne, who was making his noviciate. That he was suffering from some kind of diabolical obsession became more and more apparent, and his case grew so much worse that P. Muard on his return to the monastery was much grieved, and desired all the community to pray for his deliverance. He loved this young novice, and never varied in his opinion that he had a true vocation, which the devil was striving to destroy. He again gave him in charge to P. Etienne when he went for the Advent mission at Cussy-les-Forges. The attacks of excitement, which would now last for three or four days, were both more frequent and of a more malignant character. During the Divine Office, instead of praying, he would cast wild glances around, and was evidently greatly pleased when he succeeded in distracting Brothers Adolphe and Lazare. He refused to go to Communion, and seemed even to have a horror of it; for when the Brothers went up to receive our Lord his agitation redoubled. One day P. Benoit asked him what he was thinking about, when present at the devotional exercises. "I am thinking," he said, "that the saints had empty pates." "That is, I suppose," replied P. Benoit, "why you no longer try to become one yourself." His sole reply was a Satanic laugh. Another day he came with his New Testament in his hand to tell him that there were contradictions in the Gospel. P. Benoit asked him how many he had found, and what they were.

He quoted two or three passages which he had not understood. P. Benoit begged him to point out the contradiction between them. Again there was the same burst of fiendish laughter, accompanied by an agitation of his whole frame.

Another diabolical symptom was his dislike to the Blessed Mother of God. P. Muard had placed a beautiful image of Mary, the gift of Count Montalembert, in their chapel. The Brother, who was near it in the choir, was observed by P. Benoit for several days together to keep his eyes constantly fixed upon it. "You must pray a great deal to our Lady," he said, "for you look at her very often." "Yes, I look at her, but not to pray to her." "Then why do you look at her?" "I look at her because she is in my way, and I want to get rid of her. Oh, if I could only demolish her, how pleased I should be! If you did but know how she worries me you would not leave her there." Not being able to execute his odious desire, he tore up some coloured prints of the Blessed Virgin and of some saints which had been given to him for fixing on the walls of his cell. He also broke in pieces certain little wooden crosses which, previous to his temptations, he had carved during his recreation hours. The fragments all lay scattered on the floor, where he trod them under foot and even spat contemptuously upon them. It was hard to keep silence, but one word of censure would make him utter fearful blasphemies, and burst out in hideous peals of laughter audible through the whole house. When P. Muard came home for a day or two from Cussy-les-Forges the youth enjoyed an interval of tranquillity; but a new crisis was soon to develop itself. As there was nothing more for him to break or tear up his malice dis-

played itself in frequent acts of glaring indecorum. P. Benoit was obliged to place him where he could always have his eye upon him, or there was no knowing what he might do. At refection his great object was to make the two young Brothers laugh by some ludicrous gesture or posture. His grimaces were astounding, and, as the devil helped him to make them, they were anything but pleasant to behold. If accidentally P. Benoit, from obedience, had to absent himself for a day, and the care of the afflicted novice devolved on Brother Maurus, matters became still worse; for he had not the smallest authority over the young man, who—or, rather, the devil, who had temporary command of him—took advantage of the occasion to disturb the whole house. He pursued Brother Vincent de Paul one day with such frightful grimaces that the young religious was fain to escape into his cell, where he was near fainting with horror.

During the early months of his obsession it was easy, at intervals, to persuade the poor youth to go to confession, and then he would be quiet for a season, but after a time this became very difficult, and it was necessary to wait till the fever of his excitement had completely exhausted him, for such was its invariable result. His eyes would then look as though extinct, and his countenance assume an idiotic expression. When reduced to this condition it was possible to suggest confession to him, and he would sometimes even be the first to propose it, deploring his recent behaviour. When once he had made his confession he went to Holy Communion without difficulty, and in all respects behaved in an edifying manner. He assisted at office, made his meditation, and served Mass as heretofore. Even when under the

influence of these attacks he would occasionally serve Mass with perfect propriety, but it was necessary that the proposal should come from himself; otherwise, he was not to be trusted. After P. Muard's return from Cussy-les-Forges the Brother was quiet during his fortnight's stay. The devil seems to have been afraid of the holy founder, who had great influence over his novices. He took unwearied pains during this time with the young Brother, endeavouring to enlighten his mind and fortify him against these temptations, but he failed in removing the illusion which made him repeat, "If I willed a thing I could do it". Accordingly, no sooner had P. Muard gone to give the mission at Poilly, leaving the youth again under the charge of P. Etienne, who was always very kind to him, than the excitement returned with increased intensity. P. Muard had thought it well to suspend his studies, in the hopes of restoring tranquillity to his mind, and had set him to help Brother Maurus in his manual labour; but that good Brother inspired him with no awe, and he wielded his tools like a very maniac, as, indeed, for the time being he was. If Brother Maurus hazarded an observation, he only elicited the usual Satanic burst of laughter.

One day when he was making an outrageous noise in his cell, P. Benoit went to beg him to observe the law of silence, which their constitutions so strictly enjoined. He laughed sneeringly, and then P. Benoit proceeded gently to suggest that he should go and speak to P. Etienne, who acted as his director in P. Muard's absence; he would find him in his cell. "I can do without him," was the reply. P. Benoit reminded him that P. Muard had left him in his hands, and he added that God would bless him for

his obedience; but the young man reiterated his disinclination to go to confession to him. P. Benoit then made a last effort by giving him permission to go to one of the other three priests who were in the house at the time. "You can see them," he said, "for at this moment they are all at the door of the cell which we use as an infirmary." "I know they are there," sharply replied the Brother, "but they have not done penance enough for me; I will have nothing to say to them. I wish they might hear me say so, and shall be glad for them to know as much." The worst of it was that the devil by means of his unhappy victim contrived for a while to infect the whole house, two or three of the religious alone excepted, with more or less of a spirit of dissipation. The three priests under their roof who had come to the monastery to spend a short time in retreat, appear not to have entirely escaped its influence. A young soldier on long furlough arrived at that juncture. He was sent by P. Bernard, who was engaged in giving a mission at Lézinnes, and, being fresh from camp life, had brought away many of its bad habits. The party in retreat met every evening in the cell of one of the priests, where they talked, and smoked, and laughed so loud as to be audible in the other cells and even in the chapel. The law of silence was, of course, not incumbent on guests, but P. Muard would never have permitted such an infringement of the rules of the house. He was absent, however, and, though P. Benoit held his place, he felt unable to act with authority or adopt energetic measures.

The soldier took his departure unexpectedly after staying little more than a week, carrying off the shoes of one of the Abbés; it must be hoped by mistake.

The guests were all gone before long, with the exception of one priest who had been compelled to leave his parish on account of an unjust prosecution. He was not likely to be disposed for joyous dissipation, and, indeed, with the departure of the soldier all annoyance of that nature had ceased. But the community continued to be disturbed in mind, the Brother, whom it was impossible to silence, being the main cause. During this distressing period Brother Anselme, as yet a novice, who was filling the office of door-keeper, told P. Benoit that he had seen in spirit two devils disguised as cobblers, with packs on their backs, coming towards the monastery laughing and performing grotesque antics. They were, he said, demons of dissipation. "I can well believe it," replied P. Benoit, "for I myself find it a hard task to struggle against that enemy of community life and to preserve recollection." Brother Anselme reported to P. Benoit several other visions of devils. He had seen an enormous one walking about near the Trinclin, in the neighbourhood of two of the young Brothers; and at another time during the whole of the meditation, he perceived a demon close to one of them, who, indeed, never left his side. Brother Anselme knew him to be the devil whom our Lord called the dumb devil, who was so hard to be cast out.* But before long the prayers of those who had resisted these infernal attacks prevailed, and calm was restored to the community.

Mot so, however, to the unhappy Brother himself. One Sunday morning, when P. Benoit was returning from saying Mass at the distance of some miles, he was met in the courtyard by P. Etienne, who said, "Do

* St. Mark viii. 16—28.

you see our maniac walking outside the enclosure?" and he pointed to the Brother striding towards the edge of the rock facing the monastery and gesticulating wildly. He then retreated, probably to make his way back to the house; so P. Benoit awaited him at the entrance-gate, and addressed him thus: "It seems that for you there exists no rule whatsoever; yet you know that it is not allowable for any one to leave the enclosure without special leave from the Superior. Do you fear nothing and no one?" The Brother at these words drew himself up and replied, "Do you know what I fear? I fear saints and those who strive after sanctity; but sinners I love; those are my friends;" and he began to laugh like a madman. Then he repeated the same words, and said, "I am going to leave this house". "And where will you go?" "Into the world." "And what will you do there?" "I will do all that lies in my power to ruin as many souls as P. Muard tries to save." Then followed more diabolical laughter. "And death—do you fear that?" "Yes, I fear death. It is that which keeps me here. I say to myself, 'After you have ruined a great many souls you will have to die'." A few days after this strange dialogue, he read this passage in the Sunday morning office: *Non moriar, sed vivam;** and he persuaded himself that he would never die. As soon as he was at liberty he hastened to acquaint Brother Maurus with this good piece of news. "I shall never die," he said; "so I can amuse myself and ruin souls; I will ruin as many as P. Muard saves." There could be no doubt any longer that the devil made use of the tongue of this unhappy youth to utter these abominations and blaspheme the Holy Name of God.

* Psalm cxvii. 17.

P. Muard, as we have already noticed, left the mission at Poilly to return on the 1st February in order to receive P. Etienne's vows, which were to be pronounced on the following day, the feast of the Purification. Engaged with this ceremony, he was unable to occupy himself with his religious and novices until it was concluded. He then saw each of them separately for the affairs of their consciences, and, in order to be free to give full attention to the poor Brother, he bade him come to the confessional at eight o'clock, after the others had retired to rest. The youth was punctual to the appointment, but to all the questions of the Father he only made some scoffing rejoinder, or answered simply by a malicious giggle. He bade him make his confession. This act of humility would at once have banished the devil who held him in his power, but he could get nothing out of him but Satanic grins. Yet there the Father sat hour after hour, exhausted with his recent fatigues and shivering with cold, but forgetting and disregarding all in the sorrow which pierced his heart at the sight of his young novice's obstinacy. Four weary hours he remained in his confessional, and it was now midnight. He had employed every argument which his zeal and charity could suggest, and he now turned to his never-failing refuge. "Good Mother," he said, addressing our Lady, "if thou wilt deliver this child from his state of obsession I promise to erect a statue in thy honour on the rock of the Pierre-qui-Vire." Scarcely had he inwardly pronounced these words when the Brother said, "I will make my confession". The good shepherd had the happiness of seeing his sheep at once delivered from the jaws of the wolf, and then went to throw himself on his hard bed to take a short rest; short indeed, for

by three o'clock he was on foot again to give the signal for rising to the community.

After assisting at all the morning offices on the 3rd of February he prepared to return to Poilly, intending to catch the public conveyance from Quarré-les-Tombes to Avallon, which was to start at two o'clock. Unfortunately he arrived just too late, and had to walk the whole way. The road, always bad, was covered with snow, so, as he afterwards described his progress, for three feet of advance he slipped back two. He was so completely beaten with fatigue that he rather dragged himself along than walked, and did not reach Mlle. Richerolles' house at Avallon before seven o'clock in the evening. As he had to be on the move again early the next morning, it would have been well if he could have had that whole time free in order to recruit his strength, but a devout lady had found him out—even devout ladies will sometimes be a little selfish when occupied with their own spiritual concerns—and she must fain subtract an hour from his much needed repose. Then there was his office to say, so that his night's rest was brief indeed, and it was with pain that Mlle. Richerolles and her good servant, Héléne, saw him set out at six o'clock in the morning.

Before continuing our sketch of the brief remnant of this holy man's career on earth we must give a few parting words to the Brother. He remained quiet during the fortnight of P. Muard's absence, and for the three weeks which he was able to spend at the monastery before undertaking his next mission, which was that of St. Clement. He occupied himself much during that interval with the young Brother, who, though tranquil, was not in a satisfactory state, for he still repeated his rash boast: "If I willed to do any-

thing I could do it". This illusion was the cause or the occasion of all his temptations and trials. Three or four days after the departure of P. Muard to give a mission at St. Clement's had scarcely elapsed before the Brother was seized with another violent attack of excitement. P. Benoit was in sole charge now, as P. Etienne had gone on mission, and the Brother unfortunately conceived an intense aversion for him. The cause was this. One night, as he was disturbing the whole house by the noise he made in his cell, P. Benoit went to remonstrate with him on his breach of the rule, but without effect. There was no light in the cell, and P. Benoit gave him a slight push towards his bed, upon which, being close to it, he fell, or allowed himself to fall. P. Benoit had at the same time given utterance to some opprobrious epithet, intended, however, for the devil, rather than for his unhappy victim: in speaking to the devil, as he afterwards observed, one does not measure terms. The Brother's fury at this insult or, rather, the fury with which the demon inspired him now knew no bounds. He hastened to tell all to Brother Maurus on the morrow, adding, "If I had only been the stronger how I would have thrashed him! I cannot forgive him, and if he came near me I would strike him with my hatchet." P. Benoit thought it best to avoid him for the present, upon which he received a long letter of remonstrance from the charitable Superior, reminding him how St. John the Evangelist pursued his lost sheep after he had become the leader of a band of robbers. Ignorant of the real facts of the case, the counsel he gave was scarcely applicable under the circumstances; indeed, he was aware that it is difficult to give advice with any confidence from a distance, and

accordingly added this qualification: "After all, you must do what seems best to you".

P. Benoit took him at his word, and waited until the fit had worn itself out, when the youth himself asked him to hear his confession. That he had acted prudently would appear from the answer which the Brother gave when he questioned him as to whether he had done well in keeping aloof. He frankly told him that, had he sought him out, it would have greatly increased his irritation, and that, had P. Muard been there, he could not have done more than P. Benoit had done. This was the longest and the worst attack from which the young novice suffered, and it was also the last. As long as P. Muard lived, during which time P. Benoit had charge of the youth whenever the Superior was absent, he was quiet and regular in his behaviour, neither was he ever heard to use that ominous formula: "If I willed a thing I could do it". Many years after the founder's death he used to say, "Had he lived, I believe I should still be at the Pierre-qui-Vire"; for he ultimately left the monastery, although he remained for some years after making his temporary vows. But, as P. Benoit had no longer any personal connection with him, he could give no particular account of him at that period. All he knew was that during the latter portion of his stay he used to go out alone to work, and left off studying Latin. Probably he was again tempted in some form or other by the devil, who in the end triumphed over his vocation. The young man, in fact, quitted the monastery, but had not proceeded a quarter of a mile before he was freed from the assaults of his persecutor; neither was he ever again molested by them. From this circumstance we have reason to conclude that the

object of the evil one was to destroy the vocation of this youth, and through him to introduce disorder and confusion into the community, knowing full well, as he did, that he was powerless to effect anything against P. Muard himself.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Our Lady's Image on the Pierre-qui-Vire. Pilgrimage to St. Benoit-sur-Loire. Visit of M. Dupin. Translation of Ste. Colombe's Relics. Solemn Blessing of the Image.

The parish of St. Clement is at a short distance from the city of Sens. P. Muard was ill-content with the attendance, although the Curé, having experience of the indifference, not to say hostility, to religion prevailing among his people, was more than satisfied. These are the terms in which P. Muard expressed himself in a letter to P. Benoit: "Our mission progresses slowly; it is a difficult population to deal with. More than ever do I realize that ordinary measures no longer suffice to touch hearts; extraordinary means are needed to rouse these people from their religious apathy." Whether it were from grief at having to preach, as he regarded it, in a desert, or in consequence of his great labours and austerities, he was ill enough for three days to need medical advice. The doctor, M. Lambert, who attended him conceived from that day he warmest affection for him, which P. Muard returned with sincere esteem and gratitude. The mission, although not abounding in consolation, was far from being altogether sterile of results, and the

parish, indifferent as it had been in religious matters, long held his memory in veneration; a proof of the deep impression he had made. The Superior of the Grand Séminaire requested him to give an instruction to the Seminarists on the 25th March, to which he readily assented, and preached a sermon on zeal, taking as his text *Veni mittere ignem.* Its object was to lay before them the great work which the Benedictine Order had accomplished in the Christianizing of Europe; how, in particular, England had been converted by the religious whom St. Gregory the Great had sent thither, and how St. Boniface the martyr evangelized Germany. The Church he considered was not sufficiently known, nor were these historical facts in the records of her life sufficiently dwelt upon even in the Grands Séminaires. Such was the reason which prompted his selection of a subject.

On his way home he stopped at Tonnerre to order the materials for the statue of our Lady which he had promised to raise on the old Druidical stone. He had also made arrangements for securing at Avallon the services of an architect; and when the plan had been agreed upon, the execution was committed to able hands. The carving of the statue was to cost 150 francs, with the addition of board and lodging for the artist. This, however, was not the most difficult part of the business; for P. Muard, when he gave this promise to Mary, made it a condition that she should provide for the expense, so that he had no uneasiness on this head. But these enormous blocks of stone had to be conveyed to the Pierre-qui-Vire over roads which might be considered almost impracticable; so the Father set all his community to work to improve them as far as possible, filling up the deep ruts and levelling

some of the steepest acclivities. Still, with all that could be done, it needed five or six yoke of oxen to drag the heavy loads up the hills. All the stones were successfully conveyed to the spot by the end of May, and the workmen were ready to commence operations. P. Muard had hoped, in the first instance, that the work might be accomplished for 700 or 800 francs, but it is always necessary to leave a wide margin for the unforeseen, and this sum had to be tripled, and even quadrupled, not to speak of the expense entailed by having to maintain most of the workmen, who came from a distance. Nevertheless, nothing could induce P. Muard to solicit pecuniary aid. One day, when he was paying a visit to the family of Chastellux, the Marquis proposed to open a subscription in the Auxerre newspaper, but the Father would not accede to the proposition. Thanking him for his kind intention, he told him that the Blessed Virgin had undertaken the charge of the expenditure, and he had every confidence that she would acquit herself of her engagement. Two days later he received a letter from the Curé of Chastellux promising him on the part of the Marquis 150 francs to pay the sculptor who had carved the image. Other pious persons, unsolicited, also sent contributions, which, with the collection made on the day of the ceremony, sufficed to meet the outlay, including that of the modest dinner provided for the priests and other guests who came from a distance to assist at it.

He was much occupied during the three spring months in superintending and directing the work, but he gave a retreat, according to promise, in the course of the summer to the Augustinian nuns at Tonnerre, and also made a pilgrimage to St. Benoit-sur-Loire in

honour of that great saint, who had shown them so much favour when he and his companions were at San Lorenzo di Fanello. No doubt he also desired to obtain light with regard to an offer which considerably embarrassed him at that moment, before coming to any arrangement with the Bishop of Orleans, who had requested him to undertake the care of that parish until he had built a monastery, as was his design, for a branch of P. Muard's community, to which he desired to confide the guardianship of the saint's relics there preserved. The Father also begged all his religious to pray particularly for his intention before the feast of the Assumption. They performed the novena with much fervour, but it was not until his return from the yearly ecclesiastical retreat at Sens in August, which, as usual, he attended, that he mentioned what had been his special object, namely to obtain, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin on her great festival day, an abiding union with the Sacred Heart of Jesus, a grace which he had long ardently desired. We may well believe that the prayer was heard, for, after singing Mass, he set out on foot in the afternoon for Avallon, choosing as much as possible by-ways, in order to maintain a more uninterrupted state of union with our Lord; and he had not gone far before he seemed to be transported in spirit, and found himself close to Avallon before he was aware of having reached his destination, scarcely knowing in what manner he had made his journey, so absorbed had his mind been in God. To those who saw him that day he appeared like one who no longer dwelt on earth. On the morrow he resumed his journey to St. Benoit-sur-Loire. He remained for two hours in the crypt; and, on leaving it, he told the parish priest that his

monks would one day celebrate the Divine Office there, which, in fact, they now do.

It was during his absence that M. Dupin, the ex-President of the Legislative Assembly, returned the Father's visit, and expressed much disappointment at not finding him. P. Benoit did the honours of the monastery, and showed him everything. He describes him as rather brusque in manner. In the cell which served as their library he happened to take up a book which had been condemned at Rome. Upon which he sharply remarked, "At Rome they often condemn with little consideration". He was probably alluding to a work of his own on Gallican Canon Law, which had been censured by the Cardinal Archbishop of Lyons. P. Benoit insisted on accompanying him to his carriage, which was waiting for him a good way off, lest he should go astray in the forest. Among other apparently random questions which M. Dupin asked during the walk, he enquired whether they had a legal existence. He had prefaced this query by an apparently purposeless commentary on St. Paul's words, that he only should be crowned who had striven lawfully. It was certainly a curious and novel application of the text. P. Benoit replied that the community was as yet in its infancy, and had no legal status, for which at present they did not feel disposed to apply. It brought certain advantages, but, along with these, certain inconveniences. M. Dupin was silent. The conversation then turned to the secret societies, and P. Benoit observed that he believed they were not so dangerous as they had heretofore been. "Do not deceive yourself," replied M. Dupin; "they still do much mischief, and will continue to do more and more. They are neither defunct nor powerless, as you would

wish to think." Taking leave of his guide, he expressed a desire to be acquainted with the day appointed for blessing the statue of our Lady, as he purposed, if possible, to attend; and he kept his promise when the time came.

P. Muard hoped to be able to select one of the concluding days of September for the solemnity, and, before leaving the Pierre-qui-Vire, he had arranged that P. Benoit should join him at Sens as soon as P. Bernard had returned from the mission he was preaching, for he was very desirous that he should be present at the translation of the relics of Ste. Colombe, the patroness of the diocese of Sens.* P. Benoit, in fact, was able to join him on the previous day, and P. Muard heard with the greatest satisfaction that the

* St. Columba, virgin and martyr, was of illustrious birth and of Spanish origin. She was martyred during Aurelian's persecution, when only seventeen years of age. Brought before the Emperor, she made a bold confession, and, after resisting alike his splendid offers and his terrible menaces, was condemned to suffer the most cruel torments. The rain extinguished the flames in which she was to be consumed, upon which the persecutor had her led out a mile from the city of Sens, where her martyrdom was consummated by the sword near the present village of St. Clement, on the banks of the little spring of Azon. The church containing her tomb, and the magnificent monastery afterwards founded by Clotaire II., in the year 620, were for ages the centre of devout pilgrimages. Ravaged by the Huguenots in the 15th century, and afterwards repaired in 1790, they underwent the fate of so many other religious houses and sacred edifices. After half a century of desolation better days dawned, and the mother-house of a new religious congregation of women was established among the ruins of the ancient abbey. The work of restoration was now inaugurated, and, the crypt which had served as the tomb of the martyr having been reconstructed, it was hither that her relics were about to be transferred.

statue was mounted on its pedestal, the artist being engaged in giving it some finishing touches; so that the day could now be safely announced. This, however, he deferred doing until he could see P. Lacordaire on the morrow after the ceremony of translating the relics, for he meant to request him to come and preach to the assembled crowd at the benediction of our Lady's image. On the 28th of August the Bishop of Meaux blessed the cross raised on the very spot where the blood of the virgin martyr had been shed. P. Muard addressed some touching words to the multitude. He had been previously observed standing for above an hour, with his head uncovered and exposed to the rays of a burning sun, immovable as a statue, and rapt in prayer. Possibly, nay probably, he was absorbed in meditation on the joys of martyrdom, and was breathing forth ardent supplications that to him, too, might be conceded the palm which Ste. Colombe had won.

The next day there was solemn Mass at the Cathedral of Sens, at which P. Lacordaire preached. The procession formed at three o'clock to accompany the precious relics of this glorious martyr of ancient Gaul to their former resting-place in the abbey bearing her name. It was followed by the two Bishops of Nevers and Meaux and the Archbishop of Sens; but, by the latter's desire, they were all preceded by the Abbé François-Regis, founder of La Trappe de Staeoli, near Algiers. He had just been decorated by the Government with the cross of the Legion of Honour, in recognition of the great services which he and his community had rendered to civilization and agriculture in Algeria. Monseigneur insisted on his wearing it on this occasion over his religious habit, and gave him a mitre and a crozier. His venerable figure, with his

long flowing beard, attracted much attention from the crowds who, as a hedge on either side, lined the path of the procession. Before him walked P. Lacordaire, carrying with much dignity a true palm, which had been given to him for the ceremony. On the *cortège* arriving at Ste. Colombe the first stone of the new church about to be built was blessed, P. Muard as well as P. Lacordaire striking it after the Bishops. The procession, which had gone by the way to St. Clement's, returned to Sens by the high road. On nearing the city it came to a stand, and the prelates ascended a platform, which had been erected on the esplanade, bordering the public promenade, and thence they bestowed their parting benediction on a kneeling crowd of more than ten thousand persons. P. Muard was not successful in engaging P. Lacordaire to preach at the approaching solemnity of blessing the image at the Pierre-qui-Vire. The great Dominican told him that, if he acceded to all similar requests, he would have to spend his life on the railway; besides which, in this case, there was an insuperable objection, inasmuch as he would be obliged to preach in the open air. For this he did not feel himself equal, but he promised to send them one of his religious in his place. P. Benoit, who was present during the visit, recollected that P. Lacordaire considered their rule of life severe; he ended, however, by saying, "After all, St. Bernard teaches that salt and water furnish sufficient condiment for the food of monks".

P. Muard and his follower passed the night at the Grand Séminaire. Close to their apartment were those of the Superior of the Petit Séminaire of Auxerre, and of Messieurs Laureau and Ferray, both of them directors at the same seminary. P. Muard had been

their pupil in his youth. Before they all retired to rest, an animated discussion took place between him and the three priests concerning a young man named Vivien, who was ardently desirous to embrace the religious life under P. Muard's direction. They were strongly opposed to his leaving the seminary, on the ground that his departure would be greatly prejudicial to that establishment. Parents, they said, would be reluctant to entrust children to their care. "Gentlemen," replied P. Muard, "I love you much, and am very grateful for all you did for me when I was at the Petit Séminaire of Auxerre; permit me, however, to say that you cannot in conscience oppose young Vivien's desire to become a religious. I saw P. Lacordaire this morning and put that precise question to him. He replied that a vocation to a more perfect life ought not to be opposed; and P. Boyer expressed the same opinion also this very day.* After all, it is not with this young man we are concerned, but with the principle at stake, and according to that principle you cannot thwart him in the execution of his project to leave the world. The grounds you allege are inadmissible and of no value. Moreover, you need not fear that this

* The rule holds good even as regards a professed religious passing to a more strict order. See *The Religious State, a Digest of the Doctrine of Suarez*, by F. Humphey, S.J., Vol. ii., p. 224, &c. "To pass from one Order to another," he says, "is not in itself and intrinsically, or in the nature of things, evil, even if done by one's own authority, *so long as it is to a more perfect Order*. This may be done even against the will of one's own Order, since it is not contrary to one's obligation to God contracted by religious profession." Suarez proceeds to give certain qualifications and cautions on the subject, but it is plain from the broad principle laid down that it must apply with still more force to a vocation to the religious state from the secular.

step of his will deprive you of pupils; his departure will not prove contagious, I can assure you."

The discussion lasted an hour, and P. Benoit had never heard P. Muard speak with such confidence and energy. M. Millon alone could make head against him. M. Ferray, indeed, stammered, so could get out very few words; and M. Laureau, who could speak with facility, was not one to sustain an argument well. P. Muard concluded by saying that he would not discuss the subject any longer, for he thought it quite useless; in conclusion, he would but reiterate that they could not hinder this young man from following his vocation. "No interest," he said, "can be placed in competition with it, neither the advantage of the seminary nor family affection; nothing, absolutely nothing. It is here question of the soul of a youth, which may be saved by leaving the world, as, on the other hand, it may be lost by remaining in it." The argument, in fact, as doubtless P. Muard perceived, was leading to no result, since each party was reasoning on a different line; P. Muard never swerving from the principles taught by theology, his opponents never getting beyond the view of what was expedient for the interests of the seminary. Whether or no this young seminarist had a true vocation can never be known. Perhaps it might be a simple attraction, along with those velleities which such attractions would produce; at any rate, no more was heard of his desire to become a religious at the Pierre-qui-Vire.* Possibly, as P. Benoit observes, our Lord may have permitted these velleities in order to furnish P. Muard with the oppor-

*He became Vicar-General of Chambéry, and is now Rector of the French church at St. Petersburg—a worthy and distinguished ecclesiastic.

tunity of affirming thus forcibly the true theological principles with regard to vocations to a higher life.

On his return to the monastery he was charmed to find things more advanced than he had dared to hope. The accomplishment of his promise to our Lady had been an arduous affair from first to last. The block of granite upon which the pedestal of the statue rested was of enormous weight. It had been cut out of the adjoining hill, and the bringing it down was a comparatively easy work, effected by two yoke of strong oxen, but to draw it up to the dolmen was quite another matter. Arrived within 150 feet of the old stone, there was no longer any track, brushwood covering the rugged ascent. P. Muard and the workmen had vainly striven to assist the poor animals—the matter seemed hopeless —when the holy founder, turning to Brother Jean, said, "Let us kneel down and say a *Pater* and an *Ave*". They had no sooner finished than the four oxen dragged the waggon and its heavy load up to the stone with the utmost facility. P. Muard attributed this favour to Brother Jean's merits, who, as may be readily believed, referred it to those of his venerated superior. The statue itself, as we have observed, about seven feet in height, was now, together with its pedestal, elevated on the dolmen, from which it dominated the whole surrounding country. From whatever point of the horizon this desolate region was approached, the image of the Immaculate Mother of God might be seen rising in dazzling whiteness over the summits of the secular oaks which grew at its feet, and over the monastery of which she was the protectress. The monument bore the following inscription: *Virgini Deiparæ hominumque Matri sine labe conceptæ.*

We may conceive with what satisfaction P. Muard

gazed on the work now accomplished which had been so long the desire of his heart. With this relic of an ancient superstitious and sanguinary worship continually before his eyes, he had felt pressed to convert it to the service of the true God, as the piety of our forefathers Christianized the old pagan temples. Often in imagination had he represented to himself a colossal monument raised to the honour of Mary on the spot now dedicated to her and placed under her special patronage, so that, when he made this promise on the occasion related above, it was no new idea, but one which he had long wished to carry into effect. During the three weeks preceding the ceremony he was greatly occupied in the needful preparations for it, as well as for the reception of the guests, since three or four hundred at least might be reckoned upon who would come quite unprovided with anything to eat. Providence did not fail him. There was no superfluity, but neither was there a deficiency. As usual, his benefactresses at Avallon, and especially Mlle. Richerolles, aided by her indefatigable servant, exerted themselves zealously in his behalf. The solemnity was fixed for the 27th; the Dominican Father who was to deliver the address arrived the previous day, as well as certain guests whom it would be necessary to lodge for that night at the monastery.

The weather was very cold and the sky threatening, but P. Muard felt certain that it would be fine the next morning. He had often said, "If the Blessed Virgin desires to have a monument at the Pierre-qui-Vire she is bound to furnish the means. Now," he added, "she has been most exact in sending us all that was needed for the erection of the monument, and so she will also give us a fine day;" and, in point of fact, on that Tues-

day morning the clouds, after portending rain, gradually dispersed, allowing the sun to look forth, and the day, if not brilliant, proved all that was desirable for the purpose. Mass having been said in the exterior chapel, the procession advanced to the stone. First came the contingents of the neighbouring parishes with their respective banners. Three hundred priests of the three bordering dioceses followed; then came the monks, forming an escort to the Archpriest of Avallon, who represented the Archbishop of Sens. The line was closed by the distinguished lay personages whom P. Muard had invited. The crowd which pressed after them was very great, but far more so was that which had clustered round the dolmen, rendering it difficult to approach. The Dominican Father, P. Saudreau, ascended an eminence, subsequently levelled, which at that time faced the Pierre-qui-Vire and thus served him as a pulpit. Scarcely had he enunciated the words, "What went you out into the desert to see?"* when a perfect silence reigned around, and the closely massed multitude of pilgrims listened with the deepest attention to the discourse, which lasted about an hour.

His theme was penance. He began by drawing a comparison between the priests of that abominable worship to which this wild region and its sacrificial stone had been devoted, and their successors at the present day, the Benedictine religious. Eighteen centuries ago, when as yet the Divine Hand of Jesus Christ had not fixed in the firmament of the world the sun of the Gospel, which was to dissipate the night of paganism and destroy its horrible worship, this place was dedicated to idolatrous rites. Around this dolmen gathered the numerous tribes of the Gauls to assist at the sacri-

* St. Luke vii. 24.

fices offered to their false gods. There, upon that stone, flowed the blood of animals, and sometimes a nobler blood, the blood-royal of creation, human blood. In the depths of this forest the pagan priests made their abode. These were the Druids, whose lives were enveloped in mystery, which was to them as a mantle of honour. Their doctrine was the secret of a few privileged individuals, and its very concealment secured for it the greater awe and for the limited number of its initiated the highest honour and veneration. Great was the power of these Druids; peace and war, life and death, depended on their *fiat.* He then went on to ask who had succeeded them in this desert; who were these, its new inhabitants. "They, too," he said, "are men of great power, but who live remote from those places where the interests of nations are discussed and where their destruction or preservation is decreed. Upon their brows you will not behold the crowns which history describes as circling the heads of the pontiffs of Druidism, but on their breasts you will see the cross; and, if this cross tells you nothing of their power, humble yourselves, for you are ignorant of the greatest power existing in the world. No doubt they have not that might of egotism which sacrifices all to self; but they have the power of immolation, which sacrifices itself for its brethren; they have the power of voluntary poverty, of voluntary penance, and of the apostolate. Let us endeavour to reveal something of this power, which the world knows not."

The orator then portrayed the Benedictine monk opposing to the thirst for riches the most absolute poverty, to sensuality the most austere penance, and to ignorance and unbelief the most efficacious preaching. This voluntary penitent, he told them, had made to

God a magnificent holocaust of his past, his present, and his future. Fortune, glory, pleasure—he had sacrificed all, and devoted his hands to hard labour and his intellect to fatiguing study in this desert region. He sleeps on planks; bread, vegetables, and water form his whole sustenance. Often he chastises his flesh with severe flagellations. He is the minister, the king of poverty and suffering. "Salute his royalty," he exclaimed; "it is Jesus Christ continuing for us His mission of expiation. Praise, glory, honour to His Divinity! O my God, who will give us to comprehend the greatness and the power of the sacred ministry? Deprived of it, society would have no morrow, for evil brings forth death when it is not combated and compensated by good." Here, then, they beheld the mighty power of good marching to do battle against evil in order to destroy it or to curtail its deadly power.

Having now described the inhabitants of this desert, he turned to the image of Mary, and spoke of the need of her extraordinary protection for carrying out this triple ministry of poverty, penance, and the apostolate, for, as these religious well knew, there is an invisible enemy incessantly on the alert to thwart and harass those who strive to follow such a vocation in an heroic manner. "Let us confide, then, in the Mother of God," he said; "let us place ourselves in her hands, that she may look upon us and cherish us as her property, as her family; let us declare her solemnly to be the patroness, the strength, the hope, the protection of the Benedictine preachers." Such was their thought and their desire, and with this object they had raised this monument to her honour, both to manifest her glory to the world and to deepen her influence over their own hearts by her perpetual and visible presence

among them. The benediction of God which they were about to implore on this image would descend upon it and invest it with a majesty and a heavenly lustre which would render it worthy of their veneration and homage. "O Mary," he fervently exclaimed, "upon this stone formerly the devil reigned; now thou standest upon it, crushing his domination under thy feet. Contemplating thence, as a good and powerful mother, these generous martyrs, who consecrate themselves to thee, thou seemest to say to them, 'Fear nothing, little flock; dear children, I fix mine eyes upon you, and I am your mother'." When this discourse, a sketch of which we have here imperfectly given, was concluded, the holy image was solemnly blessed; after which those who had taken part in the procession pressed forward to offer to it a special token of veneration, and then returned to the monastery singing the *Te Deum*.

P. Muard, as usual, while preserving as ever his undisturbed tranquillity, had his eye to every arrangement, so as to avoid all confusion and give satisfaction to all. Years after, the Marquise de Chastellux recorded how he had to spend a great part of the morning in keeping the women out of the enclosure into which they were continually pressing, but where the rule did not permit of their presence; and, although the annoyance was occurring every minute during so considerable a length of time, he never betrayed the slightest shade of impatience in look or manner, but turned back the persevering intruders with the same invariable kindness. A certain number of the pilgrims were admitted to take their places round the tables laid out for them in all the rooms of the convent, while the mixed crowd dispersed amongst the surrounding

woods to partake of a frugal repast on nature's carpet. It was a pretty and a touching sight to see whole families seated on the grass, all happy and joyous with an innocent Christian joy, for the moving ceremony and the powerful address had made a lively impression on all; so that many were heard, as they ate the meat they had brought for their dinners, recurring to the lessons of penance and self-denial to which they had been listening. "What that Father told us," they said, "is very true: we take too much care of our bodies; we do not do penance enough, and yet penance is necessary to appease the anger of God." From this day the Queen of the desert received frequent homage from pilgrim visitors; and before his departure the holy founder was to have the crowning joy of beholding her honoured, at the close of the month of May, 1854, by well-nigh as numerous an assemblage of devout worshippers as had attended the blessing of her image on this 27th day of September, 1853.

CHAPTER XXX.

A Conspiracy Defeated. Last Missions.

The benediction of our Lady's statue hindered the community from having their retreat at the usual time, so as to close on the 3rd of October, the anniversary of their religious profession; and now it had to be further postponed for a few weeks on account of P. Muard's engagement to give the Augustinian nuns of Auxerre their annual retreat, as he had also done in the previous year. It was to be the last retreat which he was to preach, with the exception of their own, which took

place immediately after his return from Auxerre. A distressing incident occurred while these exercises were in progress. A young man who had been trying his vocation with them for four or five months, but did not intend to remain, fell ill when on the point of leaving. His malady proved to be an infectious fever. P. Muard, accordingly, in order to isolate him from the religious, removed him to the external room or, so-called, parlour. Providence had sent them a very holy Brother, of the name of Cadoux, who was much attached to the Father. He had acted as servant in the Hospital of Avallon for 35 years, and now took the entire charge of the sick youth, ministering to his body, while P. Muard tended his soul. He died during the retreat, and was buried at St. Léger, the monastery, as yet, not possessing a cemetery. P. Muard began his instruction that evening with these words: "This morning a tomb was opened and re-closed over the body of a young man twenty-five years of age. He was far from thinking that he was to remain here to await the judgment-day. Perhaps, before the next retreat, another tomb may be opened, and for which of us? Will it be for this one or that, or will it be for myself?" Little did his hearers then think that it was indeed to receive the body of their venerated founder, now addressing them, this tomb would be opened. His final instruction during the retreat was upon fraternal charity. It may be truly called his last will and testament, and was conveyed with all his old fire and energy. "I bless," he said, "all who shall practise this virtue of fraternal charity, but I curse henceforth and for ever all who shall not practise it, and become to their brethren a stumbling-block and a scandal. No, they shall not remain in this little

community, where must reign the humility and sweetness so much recommended by our Lord, when He said, 'Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart'." Such were Jean-Baptiste Muard's closing words of instruction to his spiritual children.

The Deans of Vermenton and of St. Fargeau had each of them requested an Advent mission for this same year. P. Muard hesitated at first as to which of the two he should keep for himself, and, after due reflection, resolved to go to St. Fargeau. He knew, as he privately told P. Benoit, that the Dean of that place was a little particular as to the manner in which his parishioners should be addressed. This might hamper P. Bernard at times, "while at Vermenton," he said, "they know us; besides, M. le Doyen, albeit the ablest of the two, is extremely indulgent to preachers". He commenced his mission at St. Fargeau on the first Sunday in Advent, and closed it at Christmas. It had been well attended, and from 400 to 500 communicated at the Midnight Mass. The Dean had evidently been well pleased, for he caused all the bells to be rung on the morning of P. Muard's departure, and wished to get up a public demonstration in his honour, but the Father, who was averse to everything of this nature, made his escape by a by-road. He went to Lézinnes on his way back to wish a happy new-year to a great friend of his, M. Boutot, and to ascertain how he stood as regarded his vocation, or, rather, as regarded the obstacles opposing it. The good man was rejoiced to see him, and gave him 1,200 francs, on the condition that they should ultimately be refunded if his daughter did not enter religion. This unsolicited and unexpected assistance was one of those instances of Providential care of which P. Muard had such frequent

experience, for at that moment money was greatly needed. Mlle. Boutot did, in fact, become a religious, and her father was able to follow his vocation and go to the Pierre-qui-Vire, but he was not to arrive there until the 29th of June in that year, a few days after the death of his revered friend. He himself died in the odour of sanctity some years later.

P. Muard was detained by bad weather at Avallon for about a week. The roads were deep in snow, and an icy wind was continually blowing, so that travelling was impracticable. He availed himself of the forced delay to see his pious friends and acquit himself of some debts. Glad he was when he was able to regain his monastery, for, besides his longing desire to return to his dear solitude, he was anxious to know how the community had fared while snowed up and completely isolated during those eight days. He blessed God when he found that they had wanted for nothing. To his inquiry after finances, which, as we have said, were at a low ebb, and by this it must be understood that money was owing, he had a satisfactory reply from P. Benoit, whom, as usual, he had left in command during his absence. He had been able to pay 600 francs due to the workmen. "And I," rejoined the Father, "have paid what we owed at Avallon; so our debts are discharged. I was never uneasy about them. Our Lord knows all, and that it is not for ourselves but for Him that we have been labouring, and for the children of His Sacred Heart."

The mission preached by P. Bernard and P. Etienne at Vermenton was in one sense more troublous and stormy than that which P. Muard had given ten years previously. In 1843 that holy man had only to contend by patience with the opposition excited against

him by some bad and thoughtless youths. But it was now an official persecution which the missionaries had to undergo, wherein were to figure, not only the Municipality and the local Commissary of Police, but the central head of that department at Auxerre, the Minister of Public Worship, and even Napoleon III. himself. Vermenton seemed fated to give trouble, but its general population was just of that description which easily lends itself to the machinations of impious and wicked men, who, on their part, as easily yield themselves to become the devil's tools. Of this class were several persons who exercised much influence in the place, either through their wealth or their official position, and these combined together in a Satanic plot against the mission.

There was a liberated malefactor at Vermenton who was suborned to cry out in the church during P. Etienne's instruction—for he was the special object of their animosity—"You may preach, but you must know that I remember you at the Bagnio of Toulon, dragging the ball about at your feet, like myself". As it may well be imagined, the good and respectable portion of the congregation did not believe a word of this gross calumny, but the bad and malicious found their account in crediting it; nor did they rest there, but opened an inquest at the Mayoralty, inviting, nay, urging all who had made their confession to P. Etienne to come and enter their deposition against him, and even to write down and hand in all that he had said to them in the confessional. Not a single individual responded to this appeal, so that the enemies of the mission were reduced to change their tactics. In one of P. Etienne's instructions he made the very simple remark, that the thrones of this world had no stable existence, and that

the earth was often strewed with their ruins. This was represented as an incitement to revolt against Napoleon, who had recently ascended the throne of France, and the Father was immediately denounced to the Commissary of Police, who referred the matter to the central Commissary at Auxerre, both these officials being accomplices in the conspiracy. P. Etienne had, unwittingly, furnished them with another handle against himself. One of the canticles sung at the church had for its refrain a verse worded like that occurring in a revolutionary song, except for the substitution of "religion" for "republic," and "Christian" for "Frenchman." It ran thus: "Religion calls us; for her a Christian must live, for her a Christian must die". This canticle, be it observed, was very well known, and was not composed for the occasion. P. Etienne was, however, accused of having caused a revolutionary ballad to be sung, and the Head of the Police at Auxerre communicated the fact, or rather fiction, to M. Fourtoul, the Minister of Public Worship. It is worth noting, as a mark of the little real favour with which the Imperial Government regarded religious interests, even in these the early days of its existence, when it was reputed to be friendly to the Church, that this M. Fourtoul had been formerly Professor at the College of Marseilles, and had been discarded for teaching erroneous doctrine. Such was the man whom it had pleased Napoleon III. to promote to the office of Minister of Worship.

This worthy wrote at once to the Archbishop of Sens to make enquiries about the missionaries and ask for explanations. For private reasons of his own, which we cannot help thinking insufficient, this prelate did not choose to interfere in the business. Yet a

word from one in his station would probably have succeeded in pacifying a suspicious Government, but this word he did not speak. He simply desired his secretary to forward M. Fourtoul's letter to P. Muard. From what subsequently dropped from his lips it would seem that he had expected to be consulted by P. Muard respecting the missions he gave, at least, any of importance. "As Vermenton," he said, "was the very last place I should have assigned to him for a mission and he was pleased to undertake it without advising me of his intention, I did not choose to occupy myself about the matter, but left him to reap its disagreeable consequences." Had not P. Muard possessed a friend in a counsellor of State, M. Carlier, who had formerly been Prefect of Police at Paris, it would be difficult (humanly speaking) to see how, when thus thrown overboard by his Diocesan, he could have extricated himself from his embarrassing situation. M. Carlier, who not only knew P. Muard and P. Etienne well, but felt a lively interest in their work, took the affair up warmly, but was in the first instance extremely ill received by M. Fourtoul. He accordingly told P. Muard that he must await a better opportunity, and, in the meantime, advised him to go and see the Procurator Imperial at Auxerre and explain the matter to him. This unpleasant affair, which had been got up by the enemies of religion, could soon be terminated by that official, if rightly informed and willing to act. The Father lost no time in following his friend's advice. The letter reached him in the course of Saturday; that evening found him at Avallon, and the next morning at Vermenton, where he preached at High Mass. The good Catholics in the place, who remembered the mission of 1843, were

greatly rejoiced to hear his voice once more, and to contemplate that fine countenance, to which ten years of holy life had imparted a look of heavenly placidity. He used all his endeavours in the pulpit to disabuse the parishioners as to the falsehoods propagated concerning P. Etienne. He was himself well known at Vermenton and highly valued by the estimable portion of its inhabitants, but most of his hearers were already thoroughly persuaded of the missionary's innocence; the rest had taken their side, and were therefore not open to conviction. P. Muard went on in the afternoon to the Petit Séminaire at Auxerre, and his friends there recommended him to go that very evening to see the Procurator Imperial. It was a reception day with that official personage, but he took the Father aside from his guests into the embrasure of a window to speak to him. His mind was prejudiced on the subject, and he did not seem at all inclined to let the matter sleep. It had become complicated by a fresh accusation, which, however, regarded only the Vicaire of Vermenton, the Dean's nephew, P. Etienne not only being irresponsible for the alleged offence, but having no cognisance of it. A careless observation of the Vicaire made in a public conveyance, which passed unnoticed at the time, was now remembered and treacherously reported by one of the accomplices, to whom it seems it had been addressed. P. Muard thought it useless to prolong the conversation with the Procurator, or detain that gentleman from his company, so he soon took his leave. When asked at the Petit Séminaire how he had been received, he said, "Very well indeed". This was no untruth from his lips, for he always put the best construction on everything and took all in good part, but his friends had their own

opinion on learning particulars, and thought he had been treated in rather an unceremonious manner. Be this as it may, P. Muard was by no means depressed; on the contrary, he was very cheerful. The conversation turning on their mode of life at the Pierre-qui-Vire, he assured them it was not so difficult as they fancied, and that his own health was all the better since he had followed it. The Abbé Millon, the Superior, said, "Reverend Father, you will not find it easy to persuade us that your regimen is very agreeable and pleasant to nature. Nevertheless, at the hour of death I should be glad to have practised it; all the same, I do not as yet feel that I have the strength or the courage to become your disciple."

The plot had been cleverly devised, nothing had been neglected to ensure success, and the party, not satisfied with misrepresenting what had occurred, did not recoil from making the most ridiculous charges, devoid of the slightest foundation or so much as the shadow of probability; but they were well aware that, when once a prejudice has been excited, there is nothing which will not be readily and even greedily swallowed. The community of the Pierre-qui-Vire were now accused of having allowed some young men to come from Auxerre and sing revolutionary songs in the courtyard of the monastery. During P. Muard's absence, the Brigadier at Quarré-les-Tombes came over, commissioned by the Commandant of the Gendarmerie to enquire into the matter. He seems to have been a good sort of plain-dealing man. He took P. Benoit aside and asked him if it was true that they had received some young men from Auxerre and permitted them to sing revolutionary songs. "M. le Brigadier," replied P. Benoit, "we have never

received any young men from Auxerre; consequently we cannot have allowed any to sing songs against the Emperor in our monastery." "I am come alone, you see," replied the worthy Brigadier; "I did not choose to speak of this enquiry to the other gendarmes, as I was unwilling that the thing should be known. A gendarme goes and tells his wife perhaps, and so the story gets abroad, and this I did not wish to happen. Do not be uneasy; you know me; my report shall be made according to what you have told me; you have nothing to fear in the matter, since you attest that you have received no young men from Auxerre, as you were denounced to our Commandant as having done." P. Benoit wrote also to the Commandant making the same statement, and adding, "If it were not that we chant every Sunday, *Domine, salvum fac Imperatorem*, some of our Brothers would not so much as know that Napoleon III. reigns over France".

P. Muard, on hearing of this transaction after his return, told P. Benoit he would rather he had not written to the Commandant. It may be observed that it was characteristic of the Father to prefer that the least possible should be done either in the way of self-justification or for the promotion of temporal interests. "However," he added, "since you have written in suitable terms, there let the matter rest; nothing will come of it but what our Lord wills, whose children we are." The pious founder was, not only undisturbed in mind at this attack on his infant congregation, but actually glad, for he took it as a sign that the work was the Lord's and not his own, seeing it was persecuted and traduced even in the presence of the Emperor himself. To be brought before kings and rulers for His sake was one of the proofs of belonging

to Christ. So he took them all into the chapel to sing a *Te Deum* before the Blessed Sacrament as an act of thanksgiving for being thus honoured.

The reader may possibly remember that P. Muard once mentioned in confidence that for the first time in his life he had experienced a temptation to jealousy, and the narrator adds that this was after the troubles at Vermenton in the year 1854. It is hardly a hazardous conjecture to make that he was tempted to regret not having been himself the more immediate object of the calumnies which had been circulated against P. Etienne and of the attacks made upon him. He was, indeed, incapable of any other kind of either envy or jealousy. A few days later he received a letter from M. Carlier to tell him that all had been satisfactorily arranged. It was brought about in this way. After the Coup d'État in 1851, M. Carlier, the ex-Prefect of police, had been named Commissary Extraordinary. Now, the region which he was appointed to superintend comprised the department of Yonne, to which Auxerre and Vermenton belonged. In virtue of the special powers with which his office invested him, he caused an enquiry to be made with regard to the behaviour of the Central Commissary of Auxerre and the Commissary of Vermenton. It was an easy task to detect the culprit in the person of the Central Commissary, the Commissary of Vermenton having only carried out the orders of his superior. Nevertheless, he had lent himself as an active tool to further what he could not but have seen was a nefarious intrigue, concocted by some of the leading inhabitants of the place. Even the family of Chastellux had been indirectly assailed, the Benedictine monks of the Pierre-qui-Vire being represented to the Government as their partisans and emissaries. M.

Garlier asked for and obtained the dismissal of the Central Commissary, but, as the Commissary of Vermenton was able to show in his own vindication all the written orders which he had received from his superior, he was simply removed to Tonnerre.

Light had begun to dawn now in high quarters, and better sentiments to prevail. It was not to be expected, however, that great personages should confess themselves to have been mistaken; neither did the Emperor Napoleon so far condescend; but M. Carlier was able to tell P. Muard that in an audience which he had just had with his Majesty the latter had said, "P. Ravignan has this moment left me. One of his Fathers had been accused of instigating the population to revolt in the environs of Clermont in Auvergne. I was minded to make an example in order to show preachers that they were not to treat of politics in the pulpit, but I have promised P. Ravignan not to proceed any further this time, and this will apply also to the preachers about whom you spoke to me." So the matter was dropped, to the perfect satisfaction of P. Muard and his community, who sought peace alone, not victory. One very consoling circumstance in connection with this unpleasant affair was the staunch fidelity of the good Catholics of Vermenton in spite of the persecution of which they became the object. Some ladies of high position in the town were even publicly insulted by their own husbands, but nothing availed to turn them away from the practice of their religious duties. The Dean and the two missionaries had the satisfaction of seeing between 400 and 500 persons approach the altar on the day of the general communion, which was also the closing day of the mission; a noble protestation against all that had been said and done during its course.

After the stormy mission of Vermenton P. Bernard was sent to preach one at Coulanges-la-Vineuse, a parish which had been greatly infected with Jansenism. It produced considerable fruit in the way of returns to God and first communions of grown persons who had lived in a state of estrangement from the sacraments. During this mission a pious individual wished to give P. Bernard material for a new robe. He consulted his superior on the subject. P. Muard replied, "This material is either for yourself or for the house. If for yourself, you must not accept; for I do not desire a precedent which might lead to unpleasant consequences." The devout person was unwilling to leave to P. Muard the disposal of the proposed gift, so P. Bernard never received it. We have mentioned this trifling circumstance for the purpose of showing the unflinching adherence of this holy man to the rules of the religious life. The Curé of Cravant, a *bourg* not far from Vermenton and, as regarded its religious condition, equally bad, was anxious to have a mission in spite of the recent disturbance at Vermenton. P. Muard did not hesitate in acceding to his request, and sent P. Etienne to conduct it. It was thinly attended, but not altogether without fruit. The Father himself remained for the present at the Pierre-qui-Vire and paid some visits of courtesy in the neighbourhood which he considered to be due, returning generally to the monastery at night. It was during this interval between Advent and Lent that he had a serious dispute with the Grand Séminaire of Sens regarding the fulfilment of a contract entered into with M. Delphin, now Brother Anselme. When he undertook the office of business-agent at the seminary, it was agreed that, if he remained, he should be provided for during life; if

he left, whatever might be his reason, he was to receive a fixed sum. He served the seminary nearly twenty years, and then entered the noviciate at the Pierre-qui-Vire. As he could now be no pecuniary charge on the Grand Séminaire either in sickness or old age, he was undoubtedly entitled to the stipulated sum. The Directors of the Grand Séminaire, however, displeased at his withdrawal, endeavoured to elude the obligation, on the plea that the terms of the contract were not clear and explicit; but P. Muard stood firm. Notwithstanding his entire reliance on Divine Providence he did not neglect human means when it was lawful and proper to employ them. Right was plainly on his side, and he gained his cause. The Grand Séminaire was to pay to the monastery the sum of 1,000 francs, in three instalments.

The Abbé Bravard had been recently appointed Curé of St. Ennemond, the poorest but the most populous parish in the town of St. Etienne-en-Forey, and he lost no time in making an earnest application to his ancient colleague to come and evangelize his flock during Lent. P. Muard in reply told him that he was already expected at Coulanges-sur-Yonne, but the Abbé would absolutely take no denial. The Father was much embarrassed, but finally decided on postponing the other mission and going to St. Ennemond. "It seems to me," he said, "that our Lord wills that I should go to St. Ennemond; no doubt He has His views and designs." As St. Etienne-en-Forey was not in the diocese of Sens he had to write to the Archbishop to obtain his *celebret*. "Monseigneur," he said, "we are labouring to evangelize the diocese confided to your care, but we are bound in justice to evangelize also those other dioceses which come to our aid, and the Pierre-qui-Vire has great

obligations to charitable persons in those of Nevers and Dijon ; without their help, we could not live, nor raise the buildings which are necessary to us." The Archbishop, who probably did not wish to commit himself to any pecuniary engagements with regard to the Pierre-qui-Vire, as to the future of which establishment we have seen him express his doubts, and, possibly, being still under the influence of the dissatisfaction which P. Muard's independent action had caused him, made no reply, but sent the required papers. Whatever may have been the Archbishop's private feelings or doubtful anticipations, it is fair to remember that he never, from first to last, thwarted P. Muard in the carrying out of his project and had allowed him full latitude in its execution.

In following, as he believed, the Divine guidance in undertaking the mission of St. Ennemond, P. Muard was very far from indulging any personal preference. It was always with reluctance that he preached in large towns. He did not think himself qualified. Now, poor as was the parish of St. Ennemond, it was situated in a place of importance. This circumstance entailed increased labour. He felt it incumbent upon him to prepare his discourses with more care and study ; and for some weeks previous he sacrificed much of his nightly repose to this object. When the community retired to rest he would betake himself to a cell, the same in which he was so shortly to die, and sit there until 11 o'clock composing his sermons. This left him only four hours for sleep. Also, in order that he might work with less interruption during the day, he referred the community to P. Benoit for all ordinary details and permissions, reserving for himself only such as were more important. This excess of mental labour, coupled with

the privation of sleep, was probably very injurious to him. Moreover, the cold and rainy weather in which he had made his journeys to Auxerre and Vermenton, and the moral fatigue which he must have been enduring at the time, notwithstanding his cheerful exterior, had told somewhat on his health. The consequence of all this was that, before he set out for St. Etienne, he was far from well, although he believed or persuaded himself that there was nothing to hinder him from travelling; but he had reckoned too much on his strength. It was with difficulty he even reached Rouvray, though not on foot, and was far worse before he arrived at Montbard, so that he was compelled to renounce the idea of taking the train to Lyons the next morning; indeed, he could scarcely stand. Accordingly he sent a message by the innkeeper to the Dean, who came to see him, and wished to remove him to the presbytery, but this holy and humble man replied, "M. le Doyen, you have a hospital here; that is the house of the poor, and thither it is that I beg you to have me conveyed". Here he was nursed with loving care by the sisters who served the hospital, but even four days later he was so feeble that, on rising for half an hour, he was ready to faint.

His best physician, as usual, was our Lord in the Blessed Eucharist, which the Vicaire brought him. On the Sunday he had a kind of crisis, which made him think of death; after that the fever left him. "I felt," he says, writing in the evening, "that I had nothing good to present to the Sovereign Judge; all my trust was in His mercy. When the crisis was passed I received our Lord, and felt better in every way. To-morrow I hope to communicate at Mass, and the following day to offer the Holy Sacrifice myself, if

it be the good God's will. He was sufficiently restored by the Thursday following to travel, but he returned to his monastery, for he felt that he needed some rest before undertaking missionary work. He had written to his friend, the Curé of St. Ennemond, to tell him of his indisposition, who replied that, living or dead, he must have him, and that he was expected at St. Etienne with much impatience. P. Muard was not one to spare himself, and he set out as soon as he felt to be able; much sooner, no doubt, than was at all advisable. It was the third week in Lent before he appeared in the pulpit of St. Ennemond. The church was crowded, and, when he beheld this multitude hanging on his lips, so to say, the spirit within him kindled and his pristine strength seemed to return. Never had he spoken with more energy and fervour, but it was no natural strength which animated him; it was his burning charity and love for souls which produced an artificial excitement. Although there were several eloquent Lent preachers in the town no one was so much followed as he was, a matter of unfeigned surprise to himself, though to no one else. His labours in the confessional, where he spent a large portion of the day, and even of the night, were very great, and Holy Week brought to them a considerable accession. How his enfeebled frame bore up against the strain thus imposed upon it is inconceivable, and, indeed, had not God supported him he must have sunk. His spirit meanwhile was much consoled at seeing the faith and eagerness for instruction still so strong in this working population. Marvels of converting grace also rewarded his zeal during this mission, which was to crown and close his apostolic career. P. Benoit says it was like the song of the dying swan.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Last Weeks of P. Muard's Life.

P. Muard returned to his monastery on the Wednesday in Easter week, two days sooner than he was expected; but, when once the mission was closed, and his presence was no longer necessary, nothing could avail to detain him for a single hour. He had met P. Lacordaire at the Lyons station. They travelled together by third class as far as Dijon, and had some very interesting conversation touching the need of penance in the present day, external as well as internal. The former they considered to be quite discarded by a numerous class of Christians, who freely allowed that interior penance was indispensable. Some directors even were prone to encourage this error, sure to find ready acceptance in a soft and luxurious age. Gladly would they have prolonged their conversation, but sleep overcame them both for a portion of the way. While their Superior had been evangelizing St. Ennemond, P. Bernard and P. Joseph were giving a successful mission in the parish of Quarré-les-Tombes. Among those who approached the sacraments were the whole corps of gendarmerie, but we are sorry to have to except the good Brigadier, who had behaved so well about the enquiry. P. Etienne had preached in the early part of Lent at St. Léger, and for the last fortnight of that holy season had gone to help the Curé of St. Germain-des-Champs with his press of work at Easter; but, as he was taken ill after hearing eighty consecutive confessions, and had to be sent home, P. Benoit took his place for the few remaining days.

P. Muard's first visit on arriving was always to the

Master of his little community, our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, the next to its sick members. From the foot of the altar, then, he went to see P. Etienne and another suffering religious. It was on this occasion that P. Benoit heard him say, that there was but one sentiment now which could move him, and that was compassion for his sick. Nothing else touched him, so great was the indifference which he felt within him for all that could happen here below. The future P. Eugène, who had entered the monastery at forty years of age, had not completed his noviciate, so was not available as yet for mission work. His health, which had suffered during his pastoral ministry, had improved under the severe regimen of the Pierre-qui-Vire. Besides P. Eugène, the community had received another accession to their number that year in the future P. Raphael, whom P. Muard had brought from St. Germain-des-Champs in the month of April. He was then but a boy of fifteen, and a sickly boy too, yet he courageously embraced and persevered in their austere mode of life, and even gained in bodily strength. Writing in 1878, P. Benoit anticipates that the time may not be far distant when P. Raphael will be the sole member of the community who had lived with their holy founder. They also received about that time Brother Jacques, of pious memory, together with his aged father, both now reposing in their quiet graves at the Pierre-qui-Vire. A younger brother, who had accompanied them, returned to the world. Soon after P. Muard's mission at St. Ennemond, P. Gabriel presented himself, and begged to be admitted into the community. The Father was, therefore, necessarily much occupied with the training of his new novices.

Another object which engaged his attention was the

erection of some additional buildings. The stone-cutters were preparing the materials for a stable, the walls of which had attained a considerable height when P. Muard died. He had hoped to be able to set on foot some profitable employment, as soon as they should have any lay-brothers skilled in the necessary work. A favourable opportunity now presented itself, for Brother Jacques and his father were weavers, and had brought their looms and the implements of their trade with them. Brother Jacques began at once to fabricate woollen cloth, such as the religious could wear, his father weaving linen cloth. He was able thereby to earn from 35 to 40 centimes a day, which, though not enough for a livelihood, was a gain to the monastery, as it was a help towards enabling the community to live on their own resources, and thus be less dependent upon alms. Poor as they were, P. Muard never accepted any payment in remuneration for the missions he gave, except what was sufficient to defray the expenses of the missionaries' journeys.

We are told that before his death he had begun fully to understand that much must be learned by experience, and that it was far easier to put down plans on paper than it was to execute them. For the last four years—that is, ever since he had entered on practical work—as he informed P. Benoit, he had not added a line to the constitutions. During that winter, however, he made an extract of the rules which they had brought from La Trappe d'Aiguebelle. There were certain particulars in these rules which he found unsuitable for their adoption; these he expunged, in this respect acting as he had done with regard to the rule of St. Benedict. "We are not," he said, "simply Trappists, or simply Benedictines; we are Benedictine preachers.

We are missionaries to evangelize the country-people; the towns will always have sufficient preachers. As for the constitutions which he had drawn up, he knew not, he said, when they would be approved; neither would he concern himself on the subject, as they could live on meanwhile under the authority of their bishops. Next to his belief in the articles of the faith, he had no firmer conviction than that he had been following the will of God, of whom, however, he was the mere instrument, ready to be cast aside when our Lord should no longer be pleased to make use of him. He added that if the Sovereign Pontiff should at any moment bid him discontinue his work, he should be discharged of a heavy burden; for to be the head of an infant community was a great responsibility, and he felt it to be such.

During a six days' indisposition a few months previously, which he was obliged to pass in the infirmary, he had realized more than ever the sense of his own nothingness and that of his work, so far as it was his. This sentiment he communicated to his brethren the first time they met in chapter, and was ardently desirous that they should share it. The feeling of his own nothingness could, indeed, be habitually observed in his behaviour, and particularly when any distinguished persons visited the monastery. He was then more than ever modest and retiring, especially if there were any great ladies present. When, however, either the Marquis de Chastellux or the Comte de Montalembert came alone, he was at his ease, and preserved his ordinary simplicity, without any additional restraint; for he had learned to know and sympathize with them, and they knew and understood him perfectly. After his return from St. Ennemond P. Muard, while chiefly

occupied with home affairs, used also to hear the confessions of persons from the neighbourhood. The recollection of him during his Rouvray mission brought him many pious souls from thence. There were, besides, some timid persons who had not yet made their Easter communion, and who had recourse to him. He was glad to help some of these poor souls who could not get as far as the Pierre-qui-Vire, by going to St. Andeux. The Curé of Rouvray, who had been much pleased with the results of the mission formerly given in his parish, now fell under the influence of the demon of jealousy, and openly declared that he never again desired to see P. Muard among his people, nor P. Bernard either. "The Curé of St. Andeux," he would say, "is a bad neighbour. He ought not to allow P. Muard and P. Bernard to hear in his church the confessions of persons belonging to my parish." The Curé of Rouvray was, no doubt, a good man, but there is a long way between a good man and a saint.

P. Muard during the month of May gave a retreat of first communions in a parish belonging to the deanery of Dijon. He had sent P. Etienne, whose health was somewhat re-established, to Roche-en-Brenil for a like purpose, but the church was large and the attendance numerous. It was too much exertion for the Father's voice, and he returned over-fatigued. He was gently chid by P. Muard. "You have not been reasonable," he said, "or sufficiently master of yourself. No one, as you are aware, is bound to attempt impossibilities. You are now going to take a rest before leaving the monastery again, for you need it greatly." After all, the zealous P. Etienne had only been following the example of his superior in thus, as we may say, using himself up. It was certainly what P. Muard had done

in his last regular mission, that at St. Ennemond. It is plain that he then received what for one who would not allow himself time to recruit his shattered powers was a severe shock to his system, from which he perhaps never thoroughly rallied. Instructions for first communions were also needed during this season at St. André-en-Morvand in the contiguous diocese of Nevers. These were committed to P. Benoit.

We have now reached the close of the month of May, and only a few weeks more remained of his earthly pilgrimage. His union with God daily increased, and he seemed ripe for Heaven; yet none of his community had any suspicion of the calamity awaiting them. On the 31st of May they had a visit frem the Bishop of Dijon, who was administering confirmation in the neighbourhood. He was received by P. Muard and his religious with all the honours which might have been paid to their own diocesan. Such, indeed, had been the Archbishop's express desire. At the foot of the image of our Lady, to whom the Prelate had come to pay his homage, the founder addressed to him the usual complimentary speech, which he had composed for the occasion, and which was full of that spirit of humility to the cultivation of which his vigorous nature had devoted itself through life. It was the last time that his voice was to be heard in public at the Pierre-qui-Vire. The Bishop, in reply, commented happily on the sentence of Scripture inscribed over the monastery door: *Si quis vult post me venire, abneget semetipsum.* He recalled how in his youth he had intended to enlist under the standard of the great Patriarch St. Benedict. "I fell in," he said, "with a Benedictine religious who had escaped the storms of the Revolution, and who was on the point of

reviving this great Order, blessed of Heaven and earth, by grouping round him a few disciples, of whom I was to be one. I love to believe that God will have taken account of this my desire." Then, not forgetting that this was the last day of Mary's month, the Bishop spoke of the Blessed Virgin. He pointed her out to his hearers as their queen, their advocate, and their mother, and concluded his discourse by consecrating the two dioceses to this powerful protectress.

The numerous gathering of the clergy and faithful then returned to the monastery, where a modest repast was served to the Bishop and his attendant priests, as well as to some notables of the neighbourhood. P. Muard had thought of everything, although he had committed the management of details to some of his religious whom he had selected to wait on his guests. He had a word for every one; nevertheless he preserved throughout the most perfect calmness, sure index of a soul inwardly united to its Lord. This was particularly noticed by many priests, friends of his, who had come to take a part in the joy and solemnity of the day. His own brethren made the same observation. About three o'clock he assembled the community in the chapter-hall, where the Bishop, at his request, addressed a few edifying words to all, and then gave them his blessing with a touching paternal affection. Thus ended this day, worthy to take its place among the fairest and grandest that this secluded monastery had witnessed; so much so that P. Muard expressed his desire that each of the religious should draw up an account of it to be subsequently read at one of their conferences. They complied from obedience, but the Father was destined never to hear them.

Early in June the Abbé Bravard came to see him and to thank him for the mission he had preached for him during Lent. They spent a few happy days in each other's company; going together to visit the church of Dun-les-Places, then to Avallon, and finally to Pontigny. It was a true pleasure to them to find themselves once more in a religious house which had so many memories dear to both. The Abbé Bravard had been a great benefactor to it lately, having collected the funds for the new building which the Fathers now inhabited. Here these two friends parted, never more to meet in this world. P. Muard returned to Avallon, whence he wrote to desire that Brother Pierre-Augustin should join him, which he accordingly did on the 7th of June, and they went the following day, Thursday, to Sens, where this young religious was to receive the subdiaconate on the following Saturday. During P. Muard's short stay there the Abbé Brullée and P. Cornat, each of whom had the direction of a community of nuns, contended for the possession of him, being eagerly desirous to profit by his advice concerning the rules which they should give to the religious under their guidance. The day did not suffice; he had to sacrifice his rest, and sat up a night with one of them and two nights with the other. When giving his testimony, in the year 1874, to the virtues of this holy man, P. Cornat said, "He was falling asleep while speaking to me, so that I could not help saying to him, 'Do, Reverend Father, go and take a little repose'". And so he did for two hours, but that was all the sleep which he got during the three days which he spent at Sens. We may well believe that he received his death-blow there.

It seems incredible how those who loved and valued

him so highly could permit him thus to consume himself, but it must be remembered how sedulously he concealed from others, nay, from himself, so far as it was possible, all that he suffered. He had resolved, however, on account of a sore throat—the precursor of the fever which was so soon to seize him, but which rest might have probably averted—to decline invitations to preach, and he wished to spend the Sunday, which was the feast of the Holy Trinity, in retreat at the tomb of the martyred Virgin, Ste. Colombe. But, having heard of a poor dying servant at the convent of the Nuns of Providence, he repaired thither, and was pressed by the religious to address to them some words of edification during Mass. He yielded, and spoke with fervour of the love of the Adorable Trinity for souls; his charity, in fact, rendered a refusal at all times well-nigh an impossibility to him. But this was not all; for, passing on his way back to Ste. Colombe by the village of St. Clément, he could not refrain from addressing the children there who had just made their first communion; then, before returning to the Abbey of Ste. Colombe, he turned aside to visit the celebrated fountain, on the banks of which the patroness of the diocese had won the palm of martyrdom. The Abbé Brullée, who had accompanied him on that little pilgrimage, said that he could never forget the words of burning charity which seemed to well spontaneously from his heart. This spot was very dear to him, and they had already left it and had proceeded some way, when P. Muard, without saying a word, turned back, like a man seeking something he has forgotten. The Abbé followed him, and found that he had returned to prostrate himself at the foot of the cross, where together they had previously knelt. He was absorbed in

prayer, but by and by, coming to himself, he seemed a little disconcerted at the impulse of fervour to which he had yielded in presence of another.

His whole behaviour that day made a deep impression on his friend; and, when he subsequently heard that he had confided to a devout person at Avallon that on the morning of that 11th of June, when kneeling before the image of our Lady in the garden of the monastery, and beseeching her to obtain for him that he might love her Divine Son as much as he desired to do, Mary gave him the consolatory assurance that his prayer should soon be granted, he considered that this explained the heavenly serenity and ecstatic fervour which he had remarked in him.

That evening P. Muard, notwithstanding all his exhausting fatigues, gave a familiar instruction at the noviciate of Ste. Colombe on the love of God. In one form or another it was now his sole topic. He ended by saying that he had lost the forty-five years which he had spent on earth, since he had not yet begun truly to love the good God. The next day he spent at Auxerre, and took one of his former pupils the round of the churches of the town and neighbourhood. He spoke much of architecture, and, comparing the Gothic and Romanesque styles, he gave the preference to the latter for religious houses, and said it was almost always to be found in the ancient monasteries. In the church of St. Germain he visited with much devotion the chapel of St. Benedict, containing an image of the great Patriarch, and the tombs of several saints of the Order. When the newly ordained sub-deacon, who accompanied him, exclaimed, with much emotion, "It seems to me, my father, that these Benedictines must feel their ashes stirred and revived in their sepulchres

at beholding new brethren amongst them". "Yes," replied P. Muard, "but they must also blush with shame at beholding our cowardice, and the difference between our lives and theirs." He prayed some time before the relics of St. Germain, and his countenance was observed to be like that of an angel, as if his soul was rapt in ecstasy. He was never, however, so much absorbed in God as to forget the smallest act of kindness to his neighbour. Among the little incidents of the day it is recorded that in the course of the walk he met some conscripts from Vireaux, his native place. They recognized him, and with his usual charity he stopped and remained conversing with these poor men for near a quarter of an hour, in the middle of the street, to the surprise of the passers-by.

The evening of the day was passed at the Petit Séminaire, and, the conversation turning upon the severity of the rule at the Pierre-qui-Vire, several ecclesiastics present expressed their wonder at it. P. Muard assured them, with the most perfect sincerity, that they were quite mistaken, for it was all a matter of habit, and alleged as a proof that, when he was put into a good bed, he could not rest, his plank suiting him far better. "Soon, Reverend Father," observed one of the party, "you will be proving to us that you have no merit in anything." "If merit consisted in the suffering," he replied, "we should not have any." Love, indeed, to him rendered all sufferings light or, rather, transformed them into joys. And this was true, not only in respect to his austerities and sufferings, but as regarded the practice of all the virtues generally. One who knew him well certified in after years that his natural disposition was so good that he had only need to supernaturalize his already virtuous intentions; and

that he had acquired such command over himself that sacrifices even no longer seemed to him to be virtues on his part. Mortification itself, in consequence of long habit, had become so congenial to him that, when it excited surprise in any, it would almost seem as if he had arrived at the persuasion, and would fain persuade his hearers, that his life of penance was easier than the ordinary life of other men. And the present may be regarded as a case in point.

The next morning found him at Avallon, where the whole day was devoted to giving spiritual direction, hearing confessions, and preaching. He said Mass in the church of St. Pierre at 11 o'clock, and expressed his joy at finding the month of the Sacred Heart observed there. The fervent words which he addressed to the congregation concerning the bliss of union with God, by faith and confidence, but, above all, by love, drew tears from every eye. When they heard so soon afterwards of his death, "No wonder," they said, "that his last sermon should have touched us so deeply. It was the Apostle's farewell." One of his devout penitents, the Comtesse Haurault de Vibraye, afterwards deposed that on this last visit of his to Avallon, so few days before his death, she had a long conversation with him. The topics of this conversation become now a matter to us of supreme interest. He spoke much of Rome, of the Holy Father, of his desire to see him again, of the misery of the times, of the perpetuity of the Order of St. Benedict, and of the special graces which God would grant to all benefactors of the Benedictines. Early on Wednesday, the 14th of June, he and the new sub-deacon proceeded to Rouvray by the public conveyance. The young man was not well, and P. Muard had himself that morning warmed some milk

for him before starting, being unwilling to disturb Mlle. Richerolle's servant. Mme. Parent had on the previous day given him some real palms, which her niece in Algeria had sent her. He took them as far as Rouvray, but, as the rest of the way was to be accomplished on foot, he left them there, and gave directions on his arrival at the monastery that they should be sent for on the first opportunity and brought with care. The fatigue of this latter portion of the journey must have been the finishing stroke. A feverish attack had set in that day, and it was with difficulty that he dragged himself along. Before crossing the threshold, however, he went with his companion to kneel before the image of our Lady and thank her for the happy success of his expedition. It was his last, for he had come home to die.

CHAPTER XXXII.

His Death and Obsequies.

Towards mid-day P. Benoit, who was on the look-out, saw the two approaching, and with the gait of travellers who were greatly wearied. "We are once more together," said P. Muard, as he affectionately embraced him, and he then asked after the health of the community, with particular reference to the sick. After his visit to our Lord in the tabernacle he went at once to the infirmary, which, as we have observed, was his invariable practice. He then spoke to, embraced, and blessed all his religious, enquired severally into the occupations which had been allotted to them, and examined the works which had been

executed during his absence; and all this time he was consumed with inward fever. He nevertheless attended all the religious offices with his community, and distributed to each his employment. At collation he took nothing, but did not retire until the usual hour for rest. He was, however, so intensely fatigued that he was obliged to lean on the arm of one of the religious to help him to mount the staircase to his cell. He spent a very restless night, and did not rise until five o'clock the next morning, the time for the meeting of the Chapter, hoping that these two hours of additional repose might give him some alleviation. He accused himself in Chapter of this weakness, as of a slothful indulgence.

It was the great festival of Corpus Christi, and he longed to give expression to all the love which glowed in his heart; but he was obliged to content himself with a few words of ardent devotion to our Lord in the Adorable Sacrament, and then he said Mass, for the last time. It was a low Mass, to which alone his ebbing strength was equal. Nevertheless, he heard the confessions of a few persons afterwards; but, in spite of his good will, he was forced to leave the confessional before all had been satisfied. He assisted at High Mass, which, had he been able, he was to have sung, and remained the whole time absorbed, and as though self-annihilated, in the presence of the Hidden God. He went to the refectory with the community, but could scarcely eat a mouthful; and, ill as he was, he did not fail to assist at all the religious exercises of the day, attempting even to preside, as usual, at the spiritual conference at five o'clock, though the very effort to speak was distressing to him. After that he went to the chapel for Benediction, which followed, and then

accompanied to the door of the monastery the Curé of St. Léger, who had been present, excusing himself from going any further with him. He was by this time so completely exhausted that, instead of waiting for collation, he went up to the infirmary, which he was never to leave alive.

He passed a night of suffering, but in the morning he lingered for some time over the hopes of being able to get up and say Mass. "You know," he said, "that my best remedy is the Divine Eucharist, of which I have often had the sweet experience." His soul hungered for this heavenly food; and it was a considerable time before he could resolve to forego his desire. The day seemed so long to him when he had not ascended to the altar. "I believe," he at last said to P. Benoit, "that I must abstain, for I feel very feeble." P. Benoit now suggested his sending to Rouvray for the doctor, M. Cullin. "Do as you please," he replied, in a tone which denoted entire self-renouncement and submission to God's will. "It is you who have the care of my health; it is no concern of mine." The doctor arrived that evening, and gave him a potion, which did no good. He came again the next morning and, acknowledging the inefficacy of his dose, wished to try another. Upon which P. Muard respectfully told him that he knew by experience that this kind of remedy had no success with him. The doctor did not insist, but promised to see him the next day, saying he would then do what might seem advisable. P. Bernard returned on the Friday from preparing for first communions at Noyers-sur-Serein, and the Father was very glad to have him back, as he knew him to be particularly intelligent in the matter of sickness and of the treatment which patients needed. The next day,

Saturday, another Father returned, a circumstance worth recording only because it furnished the occasion of an exhibition of firmness on the part of the Superior, the more remarkable as it might have been supposed that his reduced state would have prevented him from giving his attention to what some would consider secondary matters, still more from exerting himself to administer a reproof.

P. Muard was, as we have had occasion to notice, most indulgent and lenient to his religious, but he was strict in upholding the rule. Its non-observance, when needful, must be authorized by dispensation from himself; no one was to assume the license of transgressing it, in however small a particular. The Father in question had by nature a very independent spirit. Having been advised to enter some religious community in order to discipline his haughty temper, he had, on quitting the seminary, sought admission with the Lazarists at Paris. Rejected by them, he went to Flavigny and applied to the Dominican Fathers, but neither would they have anything to say to him. Thence he repaired to the Pierre-qui-Vire, and entreated P. Muard to take him. "You may remain," the Father had said, "but you see that our rule of life is severe in every respect. You will not be able to do your own will here." The young man consented to all, and P. Muard had used every endeavour to soften his self-will by gentle treatment. After his year's noviciate he had been admitted to take the temporary vows for four years, and had become successively sub-deacon, deacon, and finally priest. P. Muard thought that, if willing, he might be able to render the community good service, but after a while, finding that he gained nothing by leniency, he began to be strict with him regarding the

rule. The Curé of St. Léger, who felt a lively interest in him, told P. Muard that he must be very indulgent with him; to which the Father had replied that their rule was a thing to take or to leave, but, if accepted, it must have precedence of every thing; that no community can exist without observance of rule. Now, this religious had turned aside from his road to go and spend a few days with the Curé of Poilly-sur-Serein, whose acquaintance he had made the previous year when giving a mission there with P. Muard, and had coolly written to his superior to tell him so. He received the letter on the Friday, four days before his death, and the young priest presented himself at the monastery on the following day. "Who gave you permission to stop at Poilly-sur-Serein?" asked P. Muard as soon as he made his appearance in the infirmary. "Do you not know that it is forbidden to go anywhere unless we are sent by holy obedience?" The religious, taken by surprise, felt unable to utter a word. He retired to his cell, and, seeing P. Benoit pass by, begged him to intercede for him. "You know," he replied, "that our Reverend Father is very kind, but he does not like important points of the rule to be disregarded." The young religious went the next day to humble himself for his fault. He also made his confession; it was the last which P. Muard ever heard.

Another instance occurred during his last illness, when he was suffering acutely, which proved with what unflinching firmness of purpose he followed the principles of conduct which he had laid down to himself, relaxing in nothing on account of bodily pains and infirmities. Two timber merchants, having heard of his illness, came in all haste with their bill for some planks which they had furnished him, in which, how-

ever, they had made an addition to the stipulated price. "Show them in," said the Father. On their presenting themselves, he told them he was astonished to find that they had increased the charge on each plank. "We agreed," he said, "for so much; you shall not have more. I cannot give it you, for it is a matter of conscience." Receiving no satisfactory reply, he added that, since they could not come to an agreement, he would see them again when he was better; at present he could not attend to the business. When these men heard of P. Muard's death, they put about a report that the Pierre-qui-Vire was overwhelmed with debt.

To return to the progress of the malady. During the Friday no particular change occurred, and the community as yet had taken no serious alarm; yet they thought it only a prudent precaution that one of them should sit up at night with him, which Brother Gourdon, who was much attached to the Father, requested to be allowed to do. On the Saturday evening there was an aggravation of fever, and the sufferer expressed his desire to receive Communion immediately after midnight. The future P. Eugène watched him that night, which, contrary to expectation, was tolerably calm. His whole soul was engrossed with the thought of the Blessed Eucharist. With characteristic humility he asked the Brother to suggest to him something devout about the good God to prepare him for His reception. The religious modestly shrank from such an office, but after reiterated solicitations he was obliged to yield. He therefore began to recite verses from the Psalms which seemed to harmonise well with the sentiments of a Christian soul before communicating. As soon as he began repeating these passages P. Muard took them up and concluded them.

At a quarter before twelve he ceased sipping the drink which his burning fever had compelled him to take very frequently. He was in continual prayer, sometimes giving utterance to ardent ejaculations, at other times murmuring his devotions in an undertone. Often he pressed the medal of the Blessed Virgin lovingly to his lips. Nevertheless, preoccupied as he thus was, he did not forget to give heed to the necessary preparations for receiving our Lord in the Sacrament of His Love. He asked Brother Eugène if all was ready, and if a cloth had been brought, with two candles, a crucifix, and holy water. When he was assured that nothing was wanting he sent the Brother to call the Infirmarian, and soon they returned together bringing the Holy Eucharist. P. Muard responded aloud to all the prayers with his accustomed fervour. His countenance showed the strong faith and ardent devotion with which he was animated, but what passed within at this his last communion who can say? He then fell into a state of profound recollection, and made a long thanksgiving. When the two Brothers returned he bade the one who had watched him go and lie down until eight o'clock.

At three o'clock, P. Benoit came to see him. He told him that the fever had been strong upon him, that he had felt it beginning to affect his head, and, that his ideas becoming confused, he had been afraid of delirium, and had endeavoured to fight against it. Consequently, after his thanksgiving, he had talked of matters which concerned their work. "I went further even than I wished," he said; "for you know I do not love to speak much of the favours I have received from Heaven. they remind me of my wretched imperfection and my cowardice." It was evident that, although he had allowed himself to recur to these things, in order

to resist the painful confusion which was threatening his mind, nevertheless, in his humility, he almost reproached himself with having done so. Brother Eugène had, in fact, profited by the opportunity to lead him on to speak of the divine communications of which he had been the recipient. He had heard of them, but was ignorant of the particulars which, indeed, were known only to a few. After matins P. Muard directed that a Mass should be said, at which a Brother should assist, who could then be sent to Avallon to beg the doctor Edmi* to come and see him. When the hour for High Mass arrived, being quite unfit to be moved down to the chapel, the Father was obliged to content himself with joining in the Adorable Sacrifice from the infirmary, which was not far distant; and he begged them all to leave him to himself. In the evening the Curé of St. Léger came to see him, and he profited by the visit of this worthy priest, who was his confessor, to receive the sacrament of penance. It was for the last time.

Having finished, he questioned the Curé, who had formerly studied medicine at Besançon, as to what he thought of his state. After P. Muard's death this good man told P. Benoit that he was surprised to detect in him, as he thought, a certain secret apprehension of death. "I did not believe," he added, "that saints were ever afraid to die." In the ordinary sense of the term P. Muard could not be said to be afraid to die. He loved too much with that perfect love which casteth out fear; he had also the testimony of a good conscience, and placed the most entire confidence in God. P. Millon of the Petit Séminaire testified that he believed he pos-

* The familiar name by which his friends called the doctor Edmond Gagniard.

sessed that confidence in a heroic degree. He once asked him if he ever felt any doubts of his salvation. He replied, "None the least; so that, when I shall appear before God, if He should say to me, I do not know you, I should answer, 'How is it, my God, that Thou dost not know me? I am Père Muard, and I never did anything except for Thee'." But, as P. Benoit justly observes, fear of death is in the order of nature, since death is a violence to nature, and the flesh therefore shrinks from it. Apart from this recoil, which the holiest soul may be permitted to feel, it must be remembered that P. Muard's intense appreciation of what he owed to God, who had given Himself for him, and had been so prodigal of His graces and favours in order to win his heart, made him feel that hitherto all that he had done was as nothing in return; so that, if he desired the prolongation of his life, it was that now, at least, he might begin to serve his Lord in good earnest. This feeling, which seems at first sight to be in contradiction with the testimony of his conscience, was not so in reality. It was not that he feared to be rejected by God, for he knew well that he had always loved and served Him, but in his humility he considered that his love and service had been very poor and inadequate. From his heart, therefore, he was prepared to say, as our Lord bids us all say, even after fulfilling faithfully every commandment, "I am an unprofitable servant".

The doctor's arrival at about eight o'clock was announced to the Father, and gave him lively satisfaction. "If there are two men at Avallon," he would say, "who possess my esteem, the doctor Edmi is one of them." The friendship which united them had its basis in their common faith and devotion to God; for the doctor Gagniard was a thorough Christian, giving

himself heart and soul to all good works. The thought of seeing him appeared to cause quite a favourable reaction, but, mindful always of the comfort of others, P. Muard desired that they should give the doctor his supper before showing him up. He remained with his patient until the following morning, and, after making a careful examination of his state, was of opinion that his complaint was a miliary fever. At present he could not pronounce with any confidence as to the turn it would take. There would be a decisive crisis soon, probably about noon the next day. After prescribing the proper medicines, he left at six o'clock, promising to send the Rouvray doctor to spend the night at the monastery. On his return to Avallon he said to Mlle. Richerolles, "We are playing a hard game, and cannot say as yet who will be the winner". We see from this that hope was by no means extinct. P. Muard's community, however, were unable to realize the full extent of the danger. Anxious, of course, they were, but they could not conceive that God would permit that their revered Superior should so soon be taken from them, and from the great work he had been commissioned to accomplish. Now that the monastery at the Pierre-qui-Vire was thoroughly established, surely he would be spared to realize the prospect opening before him of sending forth branches and planting houses in other places. But such was not God's will.

As P. Muard lay there on his bed of suffering the sorrows of others occupied him more than his own pains. He enquired of P. Benoit whether there had been any amelioration lately in the state of the infant child of the Marquise de Chastellux, and, on being told that as yet the babe gave no signs of hearing, he expressed the deepest pity for the afflicted parents, and raised his

eyes and hands to heaven in silent prayer. Not long after the doctor's departure he desired to be moved into another bed. The exertion probably hastened the approach of the predicted crisis. The fever was increasing, but he had perfect use of his faculties, and gave directions to P. Benoit to write in his name to the Marquise de Chastellux. He was to avoid saying anything to cause alarm, and to read the letter to him before sending it. The Marquise and some other friends in the neighbourhood had purposed to visit the monastery on the 21st of the month. "You will tell her," he said, "that I am somewhat indisposed, but, should I still be unwell when she comes, she, as foundress, is privileged to enter the enclosure, and can come and see me here." This way of speaking about his state must have helped to keep up the illusive hopes of his religious, although to those about him he manifested doubts as to the issue of his malady. "I know not," he said to P. Benoit, "what Heaven reserves for me, but I have no uneasiness as to the future of my work;" then, correcting himself, he added, "it is not, indeed, my work, but the work of our Lord. If I am going my way, He will give you a Superior more worthy than myself."

After dictating a letter to Mlle. de Richerolles in the same guarded terms, he became much worse, and the paroxysms of pain rose to a fearful intensity. The Brother Infirmarian, who was at his bedside watching, and who observed his restless movements, asked him if he suffered much? "Yes," he replied, "I feel as if I was in an oven." The Brother suggested that the community should go in procession for him to the image of our Lady of the Pierre-qui-Vire, and he quickly grasped at the idea, and desired that it should

be organized at once. The religious went singing on the way the Litany of our Lady. At the foot of her image they recited the *Salve Regina,* and returned saying the Rosary. At first the pain, instead of yielding, appeared to increase in violence, so that it forced him to cry out, "Oh, how I suffer! I can no longer bear up against it". The Infirmarian threw himself on his knees, weeping. "O my father," he exclaimed, "you are going to abandon us, then, and leave us orphans." "No, dear friend," he replied, "fear nothing: the good God will not abandon you." A minute afterwards his pains entirely ceased, and he was pouring forth his soul in thanksgiving to his sweet Mother, who had obtained this merciful deliverance for him. May it not be that this holy man had been now suffering the pains of martyrdom for which he had so often and so ardently prayed? What he endured during that crisis must have been excruciating torture for such a model of patience as he was to confess that, had it continued a minute longer, it would have been intolerable.

When the procession had returned he sent to bid the community say the Rosary for him in thanksgiving to our Lady. Then in a transport of joy he pressed the medal of Mary lovingly to his lips, and cried aloud, "Good Mother, eternity will not be long enough to return thee thanks! Up to this day, I have done nothing for the service of thy Divine Son; I am such a coward. But, if thou wilt preserve my life, I promise thee henceforth to devote myself wholly to His cause." During the office of None it had occurred to P. Benoit whether it might not be well to take the whole community to see their beloved father once more in case the worst should happen, but on second thoughts it seemed better to prepare him first. And it

was well he did so; for P. Muard told him that at present he felt too much exhausted by the late crisis to receive them. "But rest assured," he said, "that I should not wish to depart without seeing you all, and saying a word to you." What that word would have been P. Benoit well knew. It would have been to ask forgiveness for all the scandals he had given them, as he did before they pronounced their vows. But he was not to have the opportunity.

By and by, having regained his accustomed tranquillity, he conversed on various topics with two or three of the religious who came to see him. He began on the subject of a graveyard, which he said they needed. He had often thought about it, and had spoken on the subject to the Marquise de Chastellux, who he believed would undertake the matter. Then he passed on to speak of studies, and deeply lamented that at the Petits Séminaires no attention whatever was paid to the Prophets. And yet they contained a rich mine, from which preachers might draw most profitable illustrations. No doubt his own familiar acquaintance with the books of the Old Testament and their connection with the New had helped to render his preaching superlatively instructive and convincing. He dwelt also on the principle by which he had always striven to rule his own conduct: never to go faster than Providence; not to desire to do more than God desires of us, but to stand prepared to accomplish His holy will with courage and perseverance. He even diverged to speak of the Italian clergy, and of the unjust calumnies heaped upon them. Remembering that, although he had been reluctant to leave the monastery on the feast of the Sacred Heart, he had promised his friend, the Curé of Island, that he would

preach on the next Sunday for his first communions, he said that, as he feared he would not be well enough, he wished P. Benoit to write and tell the Curé not to reckon upon him. He was also to write to the Dean of Lucy-les-Bois to apprise him that P. Bernard could not be spared for the next Wednesday to open the retreat for first communion. One of the religious read him his account of the Bishop of Dijon's visit. He listened kindly, and said a few encouraging words, but when a passage occurred in which the writer called him "Our holy and venerated Superior," P. Muard sharply interrupted him, and said, "Pray do not let that remain. I would rather you gave me a slap in the face." The same Brother said after a while, "My Reverend Father, when I was at the feet of our Lady just now I made the sacrifice of my life for the preservation of yours". "What is this you say?" he replied. "Do not speak of dying for me; death is so sweet! Speak to me of the good God, of the Blessed Virgin."

It will be observed in this, his last conversation, that, enfeebled as he was in body, his mind was still perfectly clear, though, needless to say, he was incapable of any sustained attention. Two letters for him arrived. One was from the Curé of Lézinnes, to tell him that M. Boutot would not be able to go to the Pierre-qui-Vire that week on account of the serious illness of his adopted niece. "Poor friend," exclaimed P. Muard, "how many obstacles come to delay his pious purpose of giving himself to God in the religious life!" P. Benoit then opened the other letter. It was a very long one. "Serious business," said P. Muard, "must be put off for to-day. Read it yourself, and give me an account of it to-morrow." It

was from a young lady, an only daughter, asking counsel on the subject of her vocation. Her fortune might amount to 400,000 francs. "One word from you, however," she said, "and I will leave all." The sole answer she was to receive was, "P. Muard died on Monday evening a little after seven o'clock. Pray for him; and, if he is in Heaven, beg him to obtain from God a solution of your question."

P. Benoit, who was in charge of the house, now left him for about half-an-hour. P. Eugène and P. Bernard stayed with him, but another crisis was approaching, which was this time to attack his head. He was inwardly conscious, no doubt, that his mind was becoming confused, and a little after four o'clock he asked if the Rouvray doctor had arrived. Hearing that he was not expected till the evening he replied, "If you were to go to meet him, it would make me feel as if he was coming, and would give me pleasure"; but he immediately corrected himself, and said, "No, remain". He looked deeply absorbed in thought, and kept silence, which he only interrupted to say, "How miserable a man is when he cannot connect two ideas together!" These were the last words which this holy man seems to have pronounced with perfect self-consciousness, for delirium soon followed; but the ramblings of his mind were all upon heavenly things.

After many restless movements on his couch, he all of a sudden sat up. "Come," he said, "all is ready. . . . Let us be going, let us be going." "Going where, father?" asked one of the religious. "Going to make the good God be loved. Let us go, let us set out. New means . . . new means!" One of them, guessing at his idea, said, "But one means for making the good God loved is the image you have erected". "True, but we

want others. Come, let us set out." They tried to calm him, and he laid himself down again, but the agitation continued, and he could not keep his arms under the sheet for an instant. One of the Brothers bade him cover them, and he obeyed, but almost immediately he was throwing them about again. The Brother now assumed a tone of authority, and said, "But, father, you have promised obedience". "It is true, it is true. You are my superior;" and he allowed himself to be covered up.

A few minutes later the burning fever compelled him to extend his hand a short way out of bed, but he touchingly asked permission: "Like that? I may do that, may I not?" "Yes, father." Then, forgetting the limits of the concession, he commenced throwing off the bed-covering. "But, my father," said the Brother, "you are uncovering yourself." He now seemed to imagine that he had been commanded to do so, for he turned round and endeavoured to present his shoulders. "Yes, yes," he said, "that is it. A good discipline. I have well deserved it." Lucid moments would intervene, or, rather, it appeared as if his strong mind was resisting the delirium which had invaded his faculties. For one moment he seemed to be seized with dread. He turned rapidly towards the wall, as if he saw something, then, as rapidly turning round again towards his brethren with a look of terror on his countenance, he exclaimed, "My God, do not let me be a coward". What had he seen which had thus scared him? Had the evil spirit come to tempt him to despair at the supreme hour? If so, it was his last effort, for soon the courageous soldier of Jesus ejaculated, in a tone of indescribable confidence, "Oh, yes, my God, I hope". Then, as if addressing his brethren,

he added, "But if one were not supported?" and he made an expressive gesture with his hand, as though to indicate the weakness of man against Satan when not sustained by divine aid.

After this short struggle he became calm, but his speech was affected, and his ideas remained as confused as ever. Overhearing the word "rosary," he said, "But I have not said my rosary to-day". "We are going to say it for you," replied one of the religious, and, kneeling down by his bedside, they began. "No, no," he insisted, "I must say it too." He made the attempt, but all through the *Credo* and *Pater* could only utter inarticulate sounds. When he came to the *Ave Maria* he made a desperate effort, and his strong will triumphed for a moment over its rebellious organ. He seemed to precipitate himself upon the words, and recited the prayer all through with extreme volubility, as if afraid to pause lest he should be unable to begin again. When he successfully reached the end he said, with almost child-like gaiety, "Ah! I have caught the link, however"; a familiar way of speaking which he would make use of in some perplexing business, after many previous fruitless attempts to unravel its difficulties. The religious, in spite of their deep affliction, could scarcely restrain a smile. The dying man, for dying he was though his sorrowing children would not believe it, continued to battle with the rigidity of his tongue to the end of the Rosary, the last tribute of devoted love which he was to offer to Mary. That rosary will not have been forgotten in Heaven. From time to time he continued to utter disconnected words, or mutter prayers with the same kind of rapidity. Once he was heard to say something about resigning the superiorship. "But that," he added, "would need

reflection first," an observation most characteristic of him, for he never took any step from impulse or without mature consideration and much prayer. And yet how often had he not declared to his disciples that he sighed for the day when he should be relieved from this burden!

Towards six o'clock the fever returned with redoubled force; it was the prelude to the final crisis. P. Bernard had gone to say vespers; P. Eugène and P. Benoit had remained with the sick Father. He no longer spoke, but his lips were striving still to murmur *Pater*, *Pater noster* and *Ave*, *ave Maria;* he never got any further. It is remarkable that neither of the two priests who were watching him, especially P. Eugène, who in the exercise of his ministry must have attended many death-beds, should not have perceived that P. Muard's end was fast approaching. There was, indeed, something in the change which had come over him which alarmed P. Benoit, for he went to fetch P. Bernard, and told him that he thought the Father worse. P. Bernard's first words on entering the Infirmary were, "He is very bad indeed; he is dying. We must at once administer him." The community were immediately summoned. The narrow cell could not contain them all; some had to kneel at the door, stretching forward their heads to catch a last sight of the face of their beloved father, before death should cast its veil over it. P. Bernard, at P. Benoit's desire, performed the rite. After Extreme Unction the plenary indulgence was given, and then began the prayers for the agonizing. Every member of that desolate family had his eyes fixed on the dying Father, watching with poignant anxiety the least movement or change of countenance.

The Brother Infirmarian approached and felt his

pulse. He made a gesture of hopelessness to the rest. "It is not possible!" exclaimed one of the Brothers. They ceased the prayers for the dying, and said the *Salve Regina*, they fervently invoked the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, they called on our Lady of the Pierre-qui-Vire: she *must* hear them. Then followed a short and tearful silence, and they recommenced saying the prayers for the agonizing. A fresh movement of the dying man again caused an interruption. "Let us make some promise to God," said one of the religious; "some great sacrifice," added another. Silence then ensued; and who knows how many of those devout and loving sons may not have been inwardly engaged in offering his own life in exchange for that of his spiritual father? But God was not willed to accept a substitute. Suddenly a gleam of animation passed over P. Muard's countenance. It was the last flickering of the flame. His eyes, which had been closed, re-opened and turned towards heaven, while two large tears rolled down his cheeks; he smiled—then came a soft sigh, and his beautiful soul had departed to God. Thus expired on the 19th of June, 1854, Marie-Jean-Baptiste of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, aged 45 years, one month, and 26 days.

The religious family of this holy man remained for a moment, as it were, stupified. The blow was so contrary to all their human previsions that at first they could hardly persuade themselves that he was really dead. One of the Brothers first broke the silence by rising and approaching the bed, and, as he cast his arms round the lifeless body, exclaiming, "O my good dear father!" Another religious uncovered his feet and kissed them with filial reverence; the example was

followed by all the rest, who each came in his turn to embrace and kiss the venerated remains, and to shed tears of tenderness and sorrow over them. During this touching scene the liturgical prayers were recited, calling upon saints and angels to present the soul of the departed before the presence of the Eternal King.

The sad news spread rapidly, and filled Avallon with grief and consternation, for P. Muard was generally loved and esteemed in that town, where he had been so well known for years past; and very many pious souls owed him a special debt of gratitude for spiritual benefits received through his means. Dr. Gagniard came on the Tuesday to extract the heart of the deceased and to take a cast of his face. This done, he would not retire before he had kissed the feet of him whom in life he had so long loved and venerated. He had also touched the body with all his surgical instruments. Clothed in his monastic habit, he was laid at the feet of the image of the Blessed Virgin, which then stood in the centre of the chapel. Here some torches were kept burning during the night, and the office for the dead was chanted.

Although there were torrents of rain on the morning of the 21st, a large concourse of people had assembled for the funeral, and when the hour had come for bearing the departed to his last resting-place, it was necessary, in order to satisfy the piety of the faithful, to celebrate the office again in the outer chapel. All longed to gaze once more on the familiar countenance and to carry away some memorial of him whom they loved so well. There he lay on a wooden trestle, with his face uncovered, for it had been his desire to be buried, like the poor and austere Trappists, without a coffin. A few lights and two religious kneeling on either side

formed the whole funeral pomp. But in the place of that display which is so often more a tribute to pride than the expression of genuine grief, there were the unaffected tears and sobs of the poor inhabitants of the surrounding moors, drenched on that sad morning as only such wild moor-lands can be, whom nothing could deter from coming to behold for the last time their friend, their benefactor, their true shepherd. These poor people were, indeed, inconsolable. The most tranquil faces were those of his religious children, one of whom, describing the general sorrow, writes thus: "And we, poor orphans, wept not, we were calm, but our calmness and composure had not its source in nature. Our father had promised before dying to watch over us and plead for our interests with God; and thus it seemed to us that he was gone, it is true, but only as usual upon a fresh mission."

All classes had their representatives present. The noble families of Chastellux, Vibraye, and Certaines, whose visit to the Father, then living, had been appointed for that very day, were there, and, besides the Dean of Quarré-les-Tombes and the Curé of St. Léger-Vauban, there were from fifteen to twenty priests from the dioceses of Sens, Nevers, and Dijon. When the solemn moment for interment had arrived, four religious, each bearing a lighted taper, accompanied the body of their revered founder, which two others bore slowly on their shoulders, through the weeping crowd, to the grave which had been dug for him not far from the habitation occupied by him and his companions while the building was in progress. Brother Maurus, who had been the first to follow their venerated father, was chosen to render him the last pious office. He received the precious body lovingly into his arms and, aided by

Brother Anselme, deposited it in the tomb. Together they reverently covered his head and face with his hood, and then the earth soon concealed from the sorrowing community the mortal remains of him who had been chosen by God to govern them, but alas! for too brief a time.*

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Testimonies to his Sanctity.

The life of P. Muard is all the panegyric which he needs; it tells its own tale. Were anything additional desired to confirm the opinion of his sanctity which its perusal cannot fail to convey, that further proof might be found in the letters from far and near written to his bereaved community on receipt of the sad and unexpected intelligence of his death. We have already spoken of the veneration he had inspired in the neighbourhood. For nearly three hours on the morning of his obsequies two religious were occupied in touching his body with medals, crosses, rosaries, books, and other pious objects. It had occurred to the doctor Gagniard, who so highly revered him, and who, as we have said, had extracted his heart, which was placed in a vase of lead, to reserve a quantity of linen stained with his

* In the year 1877, in the month of October, the body was exhumed in the presence of Mgr. Bernadon, Archbishop of Sens, and transferred to the new church which had been constructed. It there lay exposed for some time, and several religious were employed for four hours in touching the remains with pious objects or cloths to be applied to the sick. His sepulchre was afterwards visited by many persons who came to seek his intercession.

blood.* This had to be divided into the smallest portions, for all were desirous to possess a fragment. Everywhere, as the news of his death arrived, after the first expressions of surprise and grief, followed the exclamation, "There is another saint in Heaven," and the like. Men rejoiced to recount his virtues and good deeds, and unanimously agreed that, when they desired to pray for him, they found themselves invoking him.

"Wherefore," writes a priest of St. Vincent de Paul, "does the Lord withdraw His saints so soon from earth? The saints, it is true, belong to Him, but the earth needs them so much. His will be done!" He then exhorts the holy community of the Pierre-qui-Vire to remain faithful to their sublime vocation, in the spirit of sacrifice animated by the love of God. The spirit of their good father had been that of self-annihilation, in order that God only might appear in everything; and he could well believe that he had even prayed to be taken out of the world, lest he should be supposed to be necessary to a work of which he had been chosen to lay the foundations, but which God's Providence alone could perfect. "I reckon," he added, "among the greatest benefits I have received from God the friendship with which this holy man deigned to honour me. I regret not having taken down in writing all the words I heard from his lips; they would not constitute the least interesting pages in the history of his life." One of his former pupils, who felt he had lost in him a master, a friend, a father, and the tenderest of fathers, earnestly intreated, not only to

* Many cures believed to be miraculous are stated to have been wrought, and other graces and favours to have been received, after his death, by application of these fragments of linen stained with his blood.

receive some consolation and edification for his soul by hearing an account of this revered master's last moments, but also to possess something which might continue to speak of him, some remnant of his clothing, some instrument of penance which had belonged to him, or any little object dear to his devotion, which he could press to his lips as a precious relic. The Comte de Montalembert wrote to the community to express the deep sorrow which the death of their venerated founder had caused him. His presence, he said, in the midst of their populations had been a true benediction, and it had been impossible to contemplate and listen to him without recognising in him the impress of grace, and all the characters of the true religious. He should ever, he added, cherish with the tenderest affection and respect the memory of those too short hours which he had spent with him, and of all the moments when their father had done him the honour to abide under his roof. The experience of his own grief made him doubly sympathetic with theirs, when he considered the immense loss which the whole district had sustained, and, in particular, his holy community. But God's designs were impenetrable: they would know better than any how to cast themselves into the arms of His mercy. . . .

Père Ravignan wrote in these terms: "The news of the death of P. Muard surprised and deeply moved me. God's thoughts are not as our thoughts. We might have believed that this venerable man was necessary to us: no one is necessary. Let us adore in silence. His example and lessons will, at any rate, not be lost; for me, in particular, they will be a profitable and sweet memory, which I pray God to preserve. A conversation which we had at Sens I shall never forget. May

I follow him to Heaven!" A religious of Aiguebelle, after extolling all the virtues which he had remarked in P. Muard, added, "In fine, he lived as a saint, and he died in like manner; at least such is our most intimate and deep conviction. At the first news of his death we all commenced invoking him as one of the blessed, and it did not, so far as I know, occur to one of us to pray for him, although he was recommended to us in full Chapter." The venerable founder of the institute of the Marists at Lyons, who had just laid down the burden of superiority that he might rest from his long labours and prepare for his passage to eternity, set out as soon as information of P. Muard's death reached them, to go and pray at his tomb; but his own infirmities pressed too heavily on him to allow him to prosecute his journey, and he had to return, hoping still to succeed at some future time. The Abbot Defazy wrote thus: "I hold P. Muard to have been a most remarkable man and a saint, one who received communications (from Heaven), and who did not desire them; a saint who trod under foot self-love and the glory of this world, and who abandoned himself to Providence as a little child resting on the bosom of its tender mother and folded in her arms. M. Muard was an angel on earth, and is now one of the blessed souls in Paradise. Excuse me, Sir, if I have allowed myself to be carried away to say things which I have drawn from my sorrowful heart."

The Bishop of Dijon's letter, overflowing with regret at the unforeseen death of the admirable founder and superior of the Pierre-qui-Vire, bore the strongest testimony to his merits and sacerdotal virtues. Lately he had been able to appreciate them personally, and it was his opinion that this perfect priest rose far even

above his reputation, great as that was. When he took leave of him on the 31st of May, he had hoped that he would yet remain many years at the head of his dear community; and now, in the course of a few hours, it had pleased the Lord to annihilate all his and their hopes, and deprive them for ever of this most useful, he had almost ventured to say, this needful stay. He invited them to join with him in adoring with submission the impenetrable counsels of their Sovereign Lord, and to believe that He never strikes save to heal, and would know how to cause good to flow to them out of this cruel trial. Monseigneur the Archbishop of Sens, was not behind-hand in his expressions of deep sorrow and of high esteem for the founder of the two institutes of Pontigny and the Pierre-qui-Vire, of which the following words, quoted from his letter, may serve as full evidence. "We have been seized with consternation, Reverend Fathers, on learning what God has done, and the blow with which He has struck this diocese, by calling to Himself your holy founder: His will be done! We weep and pray with you. The heart of your Archbishop is broken." No words could be stronger as a testimony to the sincere esteem in which this prelate held P. Muard.

It is the custom of a Benedictine community to dedicate the conferences which follow the decease of any of their religious to recalling the virtues which he had practised and the good example which he had given to his brethren. In this case, certainly, materials were not wanting, and the *procès-verbal* which was drawn up of what had passed at these meetings was very full. Those who were present say that it was touching to behold the admiration and love which these pious children entertained for their departed father, as, one

after the other, they rose to express their sentiments of veneration, and to recall special traits of virtue which they had witnessed in him. One spoke of his love of God and purity of intention. Another remembered how in the early days at the Pierre-qui-Vire he bestowed on a poor man the last coin they possessed for the love of his suffering Saviour. Another recalled his wonderful evenness of temper, which made him seem always the same under all circumstances, and the exceeding simplicity of his behaviour: how he would do the greatest things without a shadow of display, as if they were the commonest actions; for, indeed, in his eyes they were so. Again, another would extol the servant of God as one of the most ardent propagators of frequent communion, the revival of which has already borne such admirable fruit in the Church.

In his former parishes of Joux-la-Ville and St. Martin's at Avallon solemn Mass was offered for him, and the faithful crowded to the church to testify their affectionate remembrance of their ancient pastor. At Joux-la-Ville a monument was raised to his memory, to which rich and poor all contributed. But it was in the grand Basilica of St. Edmund at Pontigny that the most striking demonstration was offered of the love and veneration with which he was regarded. On the 12th of July there flocked thither from all parts of the diocese of Sens representatives of every class of society. No less than 130 priests were there, belonging to all ranks of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The choir and sanctuary were draped in black. From a dome, or canopy, suspended from the vaulted roof hung long curtains on either side of a catafalque of pyramidal form, blazing with lights and beautifully decorated, but in the simplest taste. In the centre

of this funeral erection stood the vase in which had been placed the heart, brought hither for this solemn occasion, of him whom this concourse of the faithful had come to honour, that heroic heart which, so long as it beat, consumed itself for the glory of God and the good of men. Close to the catafalque, and kneeling on each side of it, were the two holy communities which P. Muard had founded. His numerous friends occupied the stalls, benches, and chairs, and not a spot in the whole sacred edifice was vacant; but all felt that one was missing who left a void hard indeed to fill. Yet could they not allow themselves to mourn for what was his unspeakable gain, and the prayers offered for him aloud, to which the lips of the worshippers inaudibly responded, were secretly and by an almost unconscious impulse transmuted into invocations. Such was found to be the general experience when men came afterwards to compare their state of mind and feeling. P. Massé preached the sermon. He had, as the reader knows, been tenderly attached to P. Muard; no one therefore, was more deeply affected by the loss they had all sustained than he on whom constraint was laid to practise self-command in order calmly to address those who could freely, and did freely, give way to their emotion. His discourse lasted an hour and a half, and resembled rather the panegyric of a saint than the ordinary funeral sermon for a good and devoted Christian, gone, as all might hope, to his everlasting reward; but to no one did it seem long, nor did the praises sound exaggerated, so fully did the hearts of all re-echo every sentiment of the preacher.

It has been truly observed that it is impossible to judge of the genuine merit or value of men by the

noise they make while on earth, or the renown that attends them. They go and are forgotten; they are not missed. The instinct of the people leads them to reserve their tears and their admiration for those whom they feel to be their real benefactors. When they depart they leave a sensible void. So is it with the saints; and P. Muard, as we have seen, had this testimony to his sanctity largely afforded. We have endeavoured to give a faithful picture, however imperfect, of those virtues which won him this place in the hearts of men; but the reader may desire to have also some description of his personal appearance, and this we are fortunately enabled to supply.

His height was five feet, six inches: this is proved by his passport on leaving Avallon for Rome in 1848. His hair was abundant and of a glossy black, which, however, was beginning to be intermingled with grey at the time of his death. His eyes were also dark, and the Comte de Montalembert has described their expression as that of ardour and sweetness combined; eyebrows good; face well-proportioned, neither long nor full; complexion somewhat tanned by exposure; beard black and thick. His mouth and chin were finely formed; in the latter there was an observable dimple; his nose in no way remarkable; his smile seemed but an expansion of his countenance. His speech was neither hurried nor slow, but had a sober gravity about it; only when he was excited did it tend to declamation. Towards the close of his life he scarcely ever spoke with animation, but in its place there was an accent of conviction which touched the hearts of his hearers. He had a powerful frame, but a little sunk between the shoulders, not, however, to any disfiguring degree. He had a slight stoop. His step was steady

and firm, but in his later years he walked rather heavily, without, however, dragging his feet. His hearing was good, and so was his eye-sight; he never wore spectacles. His constitution was sound and healthy. He would pass six hours or more in the confessional without any sign of fatigue or discomfort; he never took snuff. His demeanour was free from all affectation. He was always the same. His attitude during prayer was calm: he was taking his repose in God; his lips did not move, nor did he give utterance to any audible sigh. In saying Mass he observed a happy medium as to length of time; he said it neither too fast nor too slow. It lasted from twenty-five minutes to half an hour. His voice was sweet, without being very strong. His vocal powers were sufficient for intoning High Mass, and for singing the canticles common in missions. Such is the portrait given by one of his associates; and it is well to place it on record, while some of those who knew him yet survive, for the sake of his future spiritual children.

And now our work is done, our tale is told, but we cannot conclude without alluding to the testimony given to the eminent virtues of P. Muard by his friend the Abbé Brullée. "The entire year," he says," which we had the happiness to spend with P. Muard in his first parish, the intimate confidence with which he was pleased to honour us in the most decisive circumstances of his life, the constant relationship existing between two friends who had no sweeter pleasure than to communicate to each other their thoughts and projects, furnished us with the opportunity of admiring his sentiments and conduct in their minutest details. How upright and elevated were his aims, how fervent was his love for God, for our Lord, for the Blessed Virgin,

and all the Saints! With what enthusiasm did he speak of the happiness of devoting, consuming, himself, and dying in the service of souls! He passionately loved the religious life, and always talked of it with the greatest complacency. In the course of the last two days, when we were privileged to enjoy his society, how many holy thoughts welled up all unconsciously from his heart and fell from his lips. Alas! when listening to the various projects which he was forming for the future, we little thought ere nine days had passed God would have called his faithful servant to Himself.

"We were at the Grand Séminaire when the sad news was announced to us. At first we refused to give credit to it, but when the proofs became plainly irresistible we had but to bow the head and silently adore the unfathomable counsels of the Lord. There, before that altar where the fervent Levite had given to God so many marks of his tender piety, we felt ourselves under the impression of indescribable sentiments, such as we had never before experienced. Tears fell from our eyes, and yet a canticle of thanksgiving sprang from our hearts. It was an ineffable mixture of sorrow and joy." It was then that the thought presented itself to the Abbé Brullée that the career of this man of God could not be finished; his virtues must continue to shine amongst them, for he was one of those of whom the prophet said that after their death they speak. He at once resolved, that in case no one else came forward to write his life, he would, unworthy and incapable as he was, himself undertake the task, and thus give his friend a last proof of his affection. What proof, indeed, could be greater than to strive to further the work for which this holy man lived and, we may truly add, died?

And may not even a humble layman follow on the steps of this good priest, and without presumption claim, in his measure, to be moved by the same urgent desire? P. Muard had a special mission; he firmly believed that he had one, and this a mission which none but the consecrated servants of the Lord can carry out; but the mission to make his example more widely known, and thus forward its great object, need not be restricted to priests and religious; the laity can bear their part. If the writer, by the aid of the new and abundant materials placed at his disposal, may have contributed in any way to complete the picture of this wonderful man and present its lineaments more clearly before the eyes of English readers, not only will he feel more than compensated for the time and trouble which he has expended on these pages—for the task has been its own reward—but will ever regard himself as singularly favoured in having been privileged to participate in a work so full of high example and so rich in fruit to souls.

CONCLUSION.

We subjoin a brief review of the general affairs of the foundation of P. Muard down to the year 1872. It was always his intention, as we need scarcely say, to submit his constitutions and rules to the judgment of the Holy See. Even if his correspondence had contained no definite allusion to this intention on his part, his devotion to the divine centre of unity and his ardent desire on all occasions to conform to it in practice and discipline would have been sufficient pledge that he would wish to subject to Papal approval

the great work to which he had dedicated his life. He never, however, as we have seen, acted with precipitation. *Festina lente* was a counsel he faithfully followed, and he therefore thought it well first to put his rules to a trial, in order that he might introduce into them gradually such modifications as experience or illuminating grace might suggest to him. When he should have made all such changes as appeared needful, he would have himself repaired to Rome to lay his constitutions and rules before the Sovereign Pontiff for his formal sanction. We cannot, however, but think, from words which occasionally passed his lips, that he had a kind of presentiment or prescience that this final act was reserved for those who should come after him; and, in point of fact, his death occurred before he had been able to carry out his design, which it remained for his successor to complete.

P. Bernard accordingly proceeded to Rome, accompanied by one of his religious, in the year 1857. Everywhere they were received most cordially, but to some articles of the constitutions exceptions were very generally taken, especially to two, in which the rule drawn up by P. Muard differed from that of St. Benedict, which he had adopted as its basis. These were the rule of absolute poverty and that of a rigorous abstinence which it was deemed might be possible for individuals, as had indeed been proved, but was impracticable for a whole community. These objections were addressed to the French monks on all sides, and, without any previous concert, by several ecclesiastics in high position. This was very discouraging, but when, in an audience to which they were admitted by the Sovereign Pontiff, he repeated an observation which he had already made with reference to their rule in a

letter to an illustrious lady who befriended them, "It is more admirable than imitable," small expectations could be entertained of obtaining an unqualified approval. Neither did the future hold out better hopes, for, as it was represented to them, the Church will never approve a rule which it believes will eventually require mitigation. They were, therefore, recommended on all hands to renounce the prosecution of their suit, accept the rule of St. Benedict pure and simple, and seek a regular canonical existence by affiliation to the Benedictines of the province of Subiaco, who, through the influence of the Abbot, Dom Casaretto, and with the warm encouragement of Pius IX., had returned with great fervour to the primitive observance of their rule.

While recognising the force of the arguments used and the weight of authority opposed to them, the religious were at first much perplexed and pained. Had, then, their founder, in whom they had placed such unlimited confidence and whose every word had been to them as an oracle of God, laboured under an illusion when he believed that he had set down nothing in his rule to which he was not moved by the Spirit of God? This, however, was by no means a necessary conclusion. God might have willed the superhuman essay made by this holy man and by his followers for several years for His own wise purposes, and in order to rouse and rebuke a self-indulgent age, and might equally have willed the subsequent mitigation which now seemed inevitable. P. Muard's fundamental idea, the disconcerted religious were assured, would in no way be infringed by a slight reduction in the severity of the *régime* he had adopted, which was a mere accidental detail. His great object had been to unite the

monastic and apostolic life, according to the old observance of the Benedictines; a work which he considered to be imperatively demanded by the needs of modern times. Now, this object would be respected in its integrity. Supposing even, though by no means granting, that P. Muard had been led into exaggeration on some practical points, it must be remembered that in all private revelations it is necessary to distinguish between the revelation itself and the work of the human spirit upon it, which may sometimes run beyond the Divine will, and thus be mistaken in certain particulars. This might be P. Muard's case without his being in any degree the subject of an illusion. Instances of the kind are not wanting in the lives of saints: for example, the Blessed Paul of the Cross, founder of the Passionists, had been obliged by the Sovereign Pontiff on two occasions to soften some points in his rule which the saint believed to be the expression of the Divine will, and, after his death, the Holy See introduced still further mitigations.

All these arguments set before them by persons eminently qualified to judge in such matters, were amply sufficient to remove every shadow of scruple from the minds of P. Muard's devoted followers and reconcile them to the contemplated changes. Besides, they could not fail to remember that their founder himself, while firmly believing that his rule contained the substantial expression of the will of God as made known to him, had nevertheless been putting it on trial with a view to profiting by experience, and by any further divine light which might be afforded him. Not that he doubted the lights which he had already received, but it might be God's will to illuminate him gradually and also instruct him more fully by practical

experience. Before taking a final determination, however, P. Bernard wrote to consult the Archbishop of Sens, who strongly recommended him to abide by the advice that had been given, and, in particular, recommended him to follow in all things the counsels of his Eminence Cardinal Villecourt. Nothing further now remained for them to do. They had prayed to know the will of God, they had consulted the highest authorities, they knew the desire of their own diocesan, and, above all, the feelings of the Holy Father on the subject; they had, therefore, only cordially to submit, as their founder would in their place, assuredly, have done, and textually accept the primitive rule of St. Benedict. From henceforth it was no question of approval of the constitutions. The affiliation to the Benedictines of Subiaco was easily effected through the medium of the Abbot Casaretto, visitor of the province, with whom they immediately entered into negotiation. Their special object in the exercise of the missions was guaranteed to them, and everything in their mode of life conceded which could be reconciled with St. Benedict's rule. They acquired, on the other hand, incalculable advantages from this union: a canonical existence, with all which it included, solemn vows, and the erection of a noviciate at the Pierre-qui-Vire.

P. Bernard now hastened to return home and acquaint his community with the particulars of what had taken place. The religious who had remained behind had passed through the same painful ordeal as had their brethren who went to Rome; more trying, perhaps, as they had not the same opportunity of hearing and appreciating the weighty reasons which were urged in favour of this necessary step. But the spirit of their holy founder was living in them, and this sufficed to

render their minds open to conviction and their wills prompt to obey, generously sacrificing all natural repugnances at the voice of superior authority. P. Bernard then returned to Rome to settle all details. This being done, the Abbot Casaretto himself repaired to France, to visit the Pierre-qui-Vire, where, in concert with the superior, he was able to make arrangements on the spot for carrying out the measures which had been agreed upon between them. P. Bernard now made a third visit to Rome, in order to solicit formally the Supreme Pontiff's consent. This was granted by a Papal decree dated the 14th of January, 1859, which erected the monastery of Ste. Marie of the Pierre-qui-Vire into a Benedictine Priory, united to the monasteries of the province of Subiaco, under the immediate jurisdiction of the Holy See. While these necessary formalities were in progress P. Bernard and two of his religious, who had accompanied him to Rome, went to Subiaco, where, after a retreat of twenty days, they all pronounced their solemn vows in the hands of the Abbot Testa and in the grotto of St. Benedict; quite a special favour, not accorded to any religious for the last two hundred years.

It will have been seen that the status on which the monks of the Pierre-qui-Vire now entered differed from the old only on two points: 1. the power of possession instead of the mere usufruct of what they held, but their actual poverty was in no way diminished by this change; 2. the alteration of their *régime* by the admission of all articles of meagre diet without exception, as determined by the ancient Benedictine rule. This mitigation, doubtless, rendered the mode of life followed at the Pierre-qui-Vire accessible to a larger number of vocations, but, even so, it may be considered that the

austerity practised and so strictly maintained, wholly pervaded as it is by the spirit of penance and of poverty, reaches the utmost limits which with most persons are compatible with missionary labours. The law of abstinence and fasting is precisely that of the early Benedictines, save that, instead of adhering to the letter of the rule, which allows of but one meal a day, a slight refreshment is permitted in the morning and a collation in the evening. It will be remembered that it was to provide a substitute for this rigorous fast, which even he considered beyond the ability of most persons in our northern climes, particularly when practised in conjunction with an active mission life, that P. Muard restricted so closely the meagre diet of his community. All was now happily concluded, the whole transaction having lasted eighteen months; and the children of P. Muard, in return for the sacrifice they had made, had the joy of hearing this warm expression of commendation from the lips of the Sovereign Pontiff: "By their submission they have gained more and have deserved a higher approbation than they would have earned by twenty years of penance".

In the year 1867, the Benedictines of the province of Subiaco were erected into a Cassinese congregation of the primitive observance, having four distinct provinces, special constitutions, and an Abbot-General residing at Subiaco. A Papal decree, dated March 9th, 1872, definitively confirmed this organisation and gave the congregation a full canonical existence. The monastery of the Pierre-qui-Vire and the other houses which P. Muard's children had been able to establish after his death formed the French province, which took a holy pride in being wholly dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

The religious took for their second mother, after our Lady, the Blessed Margaret-Mary, accomplishing thus the desire of P. Muard, who was withheld from doing so only because she was not beatified during his lifetime. Rome permitted them to celebrate her feast as a double of the first class. Next to their principal patron, St. Benedict, they also professed a special devotion to St. John the Baptist, to the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, to St. John the Evangelist, who reposed on the Heart of Jesus, and to St. Bernard, who was the fervent disciple and close imitator of the great patriarch and founder of the Benedictine Order. The French province was governed henceforth by an abbot-visitor, who made the Pierre-qui-Vire his ordinary residence.

Thus had Holy Church completed and definitively consolidated the work of P. Muard. All that he truly desired, all that he asked, the Church had approved. It approved his spirit, his designs, and, taken as a whole, the means which he adopted to carry them into effect. The only change which it made was to temper the rigour of certain practices the heroic observance of which God, in the beginnings of the institute, had been pleased, as we may piously believe, to sanction, but which for wise reasons it had become necessary to moderate. It is important also to note that, while embracing, in conformity with the plan of their holy founder, and in such measure as Providence might dictate, all those labours for the good of the Church and of souls which the early Benedictine Fathers undertook, the monks of the Pierre-qui-Vire never contemplated sacrificing in any degree the perfection of monastic life or lowering its requirements in order to devote themselves to missionary work. In all their occupations, intellectual or manual, in all their apostolic

labours, whether, as now, within restricted limits, or in that wider field which, as we may trust, God will in His own good time lay open to their evangelizing zeal, the monastic life, which constitutes the end of their vocation and the very essence of their being, will never cease to dominate and determine everything they do. External work, however good and profitable, is not their primary object. They are monks first and missionaries afterwards. Nor will their active labours lose but will rather gain thereby. The fervour of the religious spirit will invigorate their work and render it more Apostolic and more Christ-like. It will impart a freshness of unction to every word they utter and infuse new grace and power into every action of their ministry. In fine, by firmly adhering to the rule of conduct they have chosen, they will remain faithful to the traditions of their ancient order and will at the same time be accomplishing the intentions of their founder, the desires of the Holy See, and the will of God Himself.

The following compendium will show how entirely conformable with the primitive Benedictine rule are the practices and employments of the Benedictine Preachers of to-day. We quote their own words :—

"1. Divine Worship, the Office night and day, chanted in solemn psalmody, conventual Mass, prayers, &c. The great intention which directs us in these different exercises is to repair the wounds and outrages which are inflicted on the Sacred Heart of Jesus by impiety, blasphemy, sacrileges, and other sins.

"2. Perpetual abstinence and fasts according to the rule. Only, instead of one meal a day, as the letter of the rule enjoins, we take something in the morning and have a collation in the evening. The other penances

in detail, in regard to clothing, bed, disciplines, &c., form the indispensable complement of the greater practices.

"3. Silence is perpetual, but the conferences and the various classes render its practice easy even to beginners. The older members know its advantages from experience, and find in it a great strength for the observance of the religious state.

"4. Every day there is an hour of manual labour for all. It is a practice of poverty and penance, and is at the same time a healthy exercise.

"5. The choir-monks employ many hours in study, both in the morning and in the afternoon.

"With this arrangement of day and night the hours succeed each other rapidly, and joy and peace reign in souls."*

* *Les Bénédictins de Sainte Marie de la Pierre-qui-Vire, 1877.*

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P. Muard's Act of Love.

Desiring to love Thee, O my God, as much as is possible to a feeble creature, I desire that all my thoughts, all my wishes, all my sentiments, all my aspirations, all the pulsations of my heart, all my movements, be so many acts of love. I desire that every character I trace in writing, every word, every letter, I read be to me so many acts of love. Would that I could offer Thee each day as many acts of most fervent love as there are grains of sand on the sea-shore, leaves on the trees of the forest, atoms in the air, and created things, and multiply them to infinity. I offer Thee, O my God, in compensation for my weakness, all the acts of love of all the angels and all the saints in heaven and earth; all the acts of love of the most holy Virgin and, above all, the acts of love for Thee of Jesus Christ our Lord. Alas! O my God, that I cannot love Thee as Thou deservest to be loved; give me, then, the heart of a Seraph or, rather, fill my heart with the love of all the Seraphim, the love of all the Saints, the love of all hearts, and increase it ever more and more that I may love Thee as much as I desire to love Thee. Amen.

Laudetur, ametur, atque adoretur in æternum
Cor Jesu sacratissimum.
Praised, loved, and adored for ever
Be the most sacred Heart of Jesus.
Laudetur, ametur, atque benedicatur in æternum
Cor Mariæ immaculatum.
Praised, loved, and blessed for ever
Be the immaculate Heart of Mary.

EXPULSION OF THE MONKS.

THE community founded by P. Muard at Pierre-qui-Vire, as well as the branch houses, was to share the fate of the other religious orders in France at the hands of its infidel Government. The following particulars, which appeared in the *Tablet* of November 27, 1880, are taken for the most part from *La Bourgogne*, a Catholic newspaper of Yonne.

On Friday, November 5th, the Cassinese Benedictines of the Primitive Observance were expelled from their monastery of Pierre-qui-Vire. The evening before, the Prefect, M. Maulmond, arrived at Avallon to make the necessary preparations. On summoning to his assistance M. Bazire, *Procureur*, he met with an absolute refusal. "I am a magistrate," replied that gentleman, "as my father and grandfather were before me; I will not dishonour my office; I resign it." M. Moreau, M. Bazire's substitute, likewise refused his assistance. Accompanied by a locksmith named Julien and a carpenter, with four companies of gendarmes and fifteen soldiers from the garrison of Auxerre, the Prefect set out from Avallon at two hours after midnight. The intention of the Government agents was to effect their purpose without the knowledge of the neighbourhood. In this their intentions were signally frustrated. Besides the monks they found assembled within the walls many of the secular clergy and lay gentlemen of the surrounding villages, with the Comte de Chastellux, a representative of the ancient *noblesse* of France and principal proprietor of the neighbourhood. The Prefect himself did not venture to approach the monastery, but remained at St. Léger. The Commissary of Police read the *arrêt* of the Prefect before the gate of the monastery. The R. P. Étienne, Superior, refused to open, on the ground that he was proprietor of the house, in full possession of his rights as a citizen of France, and that the act of the police was illegal. The same protest was confirmed by M. Bresson, advocate of the monastery. The gates were

then battered in, the strokes of the hatchet being answered from within by shouts of "Vivent les Pères! Vive la religion! Vive la liberté!" Each cell was separately broken open. The first was that of P. Eugène. "I am seventy-two years of age, and have been for forty years an inmate of this cell," he quietly remarked. "No matter for that," was the reply of the police-agent. In the Prior's cell the police found the noble Comte de Chastellux, who signalised his devotion to religion by assisting the monks, giving his arm to the aged and infirm, and invoking their blessing. The P. Jennades refused to leave his cell, and, on the military preparing to lay hands on him, reminded them that he still held the rank of captain in the army of France, that he had been at the battle of Gravelotte, and was entitled to an escort of two gendarmes. They were allowed him. The names of the sick in the infirmary were read over. The police-agent objected that five were too many; he could only allow four to remain. On hearing the name "Albéric," he enquired if he was not a foreigner. "A foreigner!" replied the P. Étienne; "he is an old *sergent d'Afrique*, seventy-two years of age." One poor young novice was dragged by force to the monastery gate and thrust into the road. A cordon of soldiers was drawn up round the monastery to prevent the return of the monks. The brethren chanted the Litany of the Sacred Heart, the *Parce Domine*, and the *Ecce quam bonum;* then they embraced one another, received the Superior's blessing, and separated. A few days later, the first of this community to arrive in England were welcomed by their monastic brethren at Ramsgate. Throughout the whole proceeding the gendarmes showed the utmost dislike to the revolting service in which they were employed.

Three days subsequently the Benedictines of the same Congregation were expelled from the Monastery of Bethisy St. Pierre, in the department of Oise. Two thousand people assembled to testify their sympathy with the Religious, but were forcibly kept at a distance by the sabres of the mounted soldiery. Four brigades of gendarmes surrounded the monastery. The usual protest was made by the Prior, and was listened to with an appearance of respect by the Commissaries of Police. The breaking in occupied several hours, as the doors were strongly barricaded. The monks were dragged out by force; the crowd all the time shouting, "Vivent les Pères!

they are driving away our friends! No more alms will be given away at these doors!" The expelled monks knelt to receive their Prior's blessing, embraced, and separated. It is to the honour of the Commissaries of Police that they executed their office with evident reluctance and with tears in their eyes.

A few days after the expulsion some of the monks arrived at St. Augustine's Monastery, Ramsgate. At their head was the Novice-Master, P. Thomas Dupéron. Through the kindness of the English Pro-Visitor, the Very Rev. F. Thomas Bergh, they were installed in a farmhouse near Stillorgan. During a two years' stay in Ireland several fruitless efforts were made to effect a foundation in that country. In September, 1882, a letter in the *Tablet*, signed "Brother Lawrence," called the attention of P. Thomas to the fact that Buckfast Abbey, Devon, was for sale. The first Mass was said in the modern house, erected on a portion of the Abbey, on the feast of the Patronage of the Blessed Virgin, October 29th. Not, however, till June 19, 1883, the anniversary of P. Muard's death, were the Fathers able to complete the deed of purchase. A temporary church was begun on St. Peter's day in the same month, and built under the directions of the Bishop of Plymouth, with the assistance of his Lordship and other generous friends, the earliest gift being one of £100 from Dr. Macnamara, of Torquay. The ancient tower, attached to the *cellarium*, was first restored, towards which the Duke of Norfolk, Dr. St. George Mivart, and others most generously contributed. The south side of the Abbey was next undertaken, the plan being to build on the original foundations in 12th century style. The first stone was laid on the feast of St. Justina of Padua, October 7th, 1884, by the Right Reverend Nicholas Canevello, Abbot-General of the Cassinese Congregation of the Primitive Observance. The greatest portion of the expense was defrayed by Lord Clifford. It was opened by the Bishop of Plymouth on April 29th, 1886, feast of St. Robert of Molesmes, the founder of Citeaux. (For fuller particulars respecting the Abbey as it was and as it is the reader is referred to *Buckfast Abbey*, by the Rev. Adam Hamilton, O. S. B. Sold at the Abbey.)

List of Monasteries founded from Pierre-qui-Vire.

1. Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, Bethisy, Oise, 1859.

2. St. Benoit-sur-Loire, the ancient Basilica of Fleury, founded 641, suppressed at the Revolution. The buildings of the church date from the 7th century to the end of the 12th. From this monastery originated St. Dunstan's revival in England, to which Buckfast owes its existence. The monks of Pierre-qui-Vire were installed here by Mgr. Dupanloup, Bishop of Orleans, in 1865.

3. The Immaculate Heart of Mary, Belloc, Basses Pyrénées, 1875.

4. St. Pierre de Canon in the Diocese of Aix, 1875.

5. Sacred Heart Abbey and Prefecture Apostolic of the Indian Territory, U. S. America, 1875.

6. The Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, Kerbineac, in diocese of Quimper, 1878.

7. St. Mary's Abbey, Buckfast, Buckfastleigh, Devon (founded about 980, suppressed at the Dissolution), 1886.

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